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THE SCOTTISH SANCTUARY

AS IT WAS, AND AS IT IS.

“Those who are for no changes, and those who befriend all changes  
are equally unreasonable and anti-scriptural in their conduct.”—

DAVID KING, LL.D

SCS #1378

THE  
SCOTTISH SANCTUARY

AS IT WAS AND AS IT IS

OR

RECENT CHANGES IN THE PUBLIC WORSHIP  
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES  
IN SCOTLAND

BY THE

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*Shirley 1872 - 74*

EDINBURGH  
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“Quodd si tam Græcis novitas invisâ fuisset,  
Quàm nobis, quid nunc esset vetus?”—

HORAT., *Ep.* lib. ii. 1.

“Reperiuntur ingenia alia in admirationem antiquitatis, alia in amorem et amplexum novitatis effusa: pauca verò ejus temperamenti sunt ut modum tenere possunt, quin ut quæ rectè posita sunt ab antiquis convellant, aut ea contemnant quæ rectè afferuntur a novis.”—BACON, *Nov. Org.* lib. i. 56.



## PREFACE.

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IN the following pages an account is given of some of the changes that have taken place, more or less recently, in the mode of conducting the services of Public Worship in the Presbyterian Churches, especially in one of the Dissenting Presbyterian Churches, of Scotland. Use has been made to some extent of a volume published a few years ago, which contained historical notices of the United Presbyterian Congregation of which the Author is the senior minister. Some of those who have read that book may also peruse this; but the Author does not apprehend any complaint on their part, as it will be found that, where the same topics are adverted to, the illustration has been varied, and very considerably enlarged, and the greater part of this work is new.

“Public worship,” says Vinet, “comprehends, according to the usual mode of regarding it, all that occupies the time during which a congregation is assembled in the name of God,” thus including instruction as well as devotion. It is in this wide sense that the phrase is used in the title.

In an Appendix I have noticed a practice, now fallen into desuetude, which in past times was considered an indispensable part of pastoral work ; and have adverted to some particulars in which improvement is happily exhibited in the important matter of behaviour in the house of God.

### ERRATA.

Page vii. l. 14, *for* "Preparing," *read* "Prefacing."

Page viii. l. 7 from foot, *for* "CONSTITUTION," *read* "CONTRIBUTION."

Page 188, 2nd Col., l. 9, *for* "History," *read* "Victory."

Page 188, 2nd Col., l. 10, *for* "vigorous," *read* "rigorous."

Page 191, 1st Col. l. 8, *for* "tune," *read* "time."



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## CHAPTER I.

### *PRAISE, OR THE SERVICE OF SONG.*

PRAISE, as an act or exercise of religious worship, possesses the character both of adoration and thanksgiving. It consists in “extolling” and “blessing” God. It is the devout celebration of His perfections, works, and ways, and the grateful acknowledgment of His mercies. Singing, or the utterance of musical sounds, combined with measured composition in the form of hymns, has been in all ages the principal mode of performing this exercise, and of thus expressing the sentiments and emotions of genuine piety. The service of song was an important part of the worship of the people of God in ancient times ; and it was observed by the early Christians in their public assemblies. During the long period termed “the dark ages,” the people were debarred from joining in the psalmody, the hymns that were sung being composed in a language unknown to them ; but the Reformation in the seventeenth century restored to the people the enjoyment of their right to participate in this primitive and edifying part of public

worship.<sup>1</sup> It has all along formed a prominent part of the service in the Presbyterian Church of our land. The early Scottish Reformers, while they excluded instrumental music from the churches, paid great attention to the singing. In Knox's Psalter, arranged for use in the public assembly, the metrical psalms were set to music in harmony of four parts. In subsequent times, however, congregational singing came to be of a very inferior character. An indignant writer described the psalmody of Scotland as "a howling wilderness." But that of England seems to have been little better. Thomas Mace, in his book on Psalmody, says, "I shall not blazon it abroad in print how miserably the Prophet David's Psalms are (as I may say) tortured and tormented, and the service of God dishonoured, made coarse, or ridiculous thereby. It is sad to hear what whining, tooting, yelling, and screeching there is in many congregations."<sup>2</sup> In some places of worship still, instead of harmonious music, or "grave sweet melody," sounds are heard that are little calculated to excite and promote devotional

<sup>1</sup> Eadie's "Eccl. Cyc.," Art. *Psalmody*. "Singing," as Vinet remarks, "is the art which visibly unites the whole congregation, which assigns to believers an active share in public worship, and in which their liberty is more entire."—"Pastoral Theology," Part iii. Sect. I.

<sup>2</sup> Stanford's "Philip Doddridge," p. 128. In the latter part of last century, John Ryland, on one occasion, having been discoursing on the presence of angels in Christian assemblies, said to the people, when they had sung after sermon, "I wonder the angels of God do not wrench your necks off,"—a saying certainly very exceptionable, but strongly indicating how bad the singing must have been.--Jay's "Autobiography," p. 293.



feeling. Much more attention, however, has of late been paid to sacred music ; and there is corresponding improvement exhibited in the service of song in the various churches.

## MATERIALS OF PRAISE.

For the performance of this part of Divine worship, we are furnished with ample materials in the Scriptures. "The hymns of praise are among the most numerous, sublime, and impressive parts of the sacred devotional writings, supplying materials and models for this most becoming and reasonable service."<sup>1</sup> The Psalms of David, especially, were composed for the use of the Church in public praise under the ancient dispensation of religion ; and they are equally adapted for the use of the Christian Church, since the greater part of them is occupied with the exercises of moral and spiritual worship, which are essentially the same in all ages. It is true that the views and experiences of the saints in Old Testament times were more limited than those of Christians are, in consequence of the comparative obscurity, and other disadvantages, that characterised the old economy ; but little, if aught, of this difference is discernible in the Psalms. The inspired writers of these sacred songs seem to rise above the ancient state of things, and to anticipate the privileges and joys of "the age to come ;" and it would be well if Christians did not fall short of the high and blessed attainments which they discover. It is obvious, indeed, that many of the Psalms

<sup>1</sup>Pye Smith's "First Lines," p. 642.

were designed especially for the New Testament age; those, for example, that relate to the good things of the promise,—the coming and kingdom of the Messiah, and the blessings that should, as the result of His propitiatory sacrifice, be enjoyed by men of all nations,—which prophetic songs, the predictions having received their fulfilment, can now be sung by the people of God, with the understanding as well as with the heart, in all their plenitude of meaning. The apostle Paul exhorts Christians to “sing to the Lord in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs;” and the reference of these words seems to be to the inspired Psalter, for the second and third of the terms employed, as well as the first, correspond to the titles of the different classes of compositions in the one Book of Psalms. At the same time, it might be presumed that if, in primitive times, there were in use other sacred songs, they would be designated by the names applied to those in the ancient Psalter; and, while there is no precept in the New Testament restricting us to the use of the Psalms, there are some passages—such as those in the Book of the Revelation, that recite the praises of the Christian Church—which may evidently seem to lead to a more extended practice, or to authorise the use of sacred songs of human composition that are based on the language of Scripture, or suggested by it, and imbued with sound evangelical sentiment.

#### THE PSALMS.

The oldest version of the Psalms in English metre is that of Sternhold and Hopkins, the former of whom,

groom of the robes to Henry VIII. and Edward VI., versified fifty-one of the Psalms, and the latter, a minister in Suffolk, with the assistance of several other pens, completed what Sternhold had begun.<sup>1</sup> This version gradually got into use throughout the Church of England, and continued to be used until displaced by the present revised version in the beginning of the eighteenth century. "It has been said," says M'Crie, "that there was a Scottish version of the Psalms at a very early period. It is more certain that before the year 1546, a number of the Psalms were translated in metre ; for George Wishart sang one of them in the house of Ormiston, on the night on which he was apprehended. (Knox's History, p. 49.) The two lines quoted by Knox answer to the beginning of the second stanza of the 51st Psalm, inserted in Scottish Poems of the sixteenth century. They were commonly sung in the Assemblies of the Protestants in the year 1556." "This version was not completed ; and at the establishment of the Reformation, it was supplanted in the churches by the version begun by Sternhold and Hopkins, and finished by the English exiles at Geneva."<sup>2</sup> While, however, the great body of the work

<sup>1</sup> In an able article in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, Oct. 1870, it is shown that "to Calvin belongs the honour of being the first man at whose instance the whole Book of Psalms was ever rendered into the metre of any living language, for the use of the people in their song of praise." In a letter to Farel, dated 1539, Calvin says that he had begun to versify the Psalms, and adds that the 46th and 25th were his earliest efforts. At Calvin's request, Clement Marot devoted himself to this good work ; and after the death of Marot, Calvin applied to Beza to complete the metrical version of the Psalms.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of John Knox," vol. i. Note K.

was the same as that adopted by the Church of England, many alterations were made, and, in several instances, new translations of particular Psalms were substituted for those in the English Psalter. This version continued in use for about a hundred years. In 1631 a version of the Psalms written by Sir William Alexander, afterwards Earl of Stirling, a poet of no mean reputation in his own country, was published with the title, "The Psalms of David, translated by King James;" but this nominally royal version found no great favour in the eyes of the Scottish Church, and "little more," it has been remarked, "can be said in praise of it, than that the best of it is not bad." In 1643 there appeared a version of the Psalms by Francis Rous, Member of Parliament for Truro, in Cornwall, and a younger son of Sir Anthony Rous, knight of that county. This version, after repeated revisals, was approved of by the Westminster Assembly; and, having undergone further careful revision by members of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, it was adopted and sanctioned in 1649, and, on the 15th day of May in the following year, was for the first time used publicly in Glasgow. It claims to be "more plain, smooth, and agreeable to the text, than any" versions "heretofore;" and though many attempts have been made to supersede it, yet none have been successful, the firmness with which it has held its place being, undoubtedly, owing to its real excellence, its intrinsic merits, as well as to the endearing associations with which it has come to be surrounded.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter in a local newspaper by the late Rev. James M'Kenzie, Dunfermline. *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, Jan. 1879.

## THE PARAPHRASES.

The Church of Scotland from the beginning contemplated an addition to the Psalms ; but it was not till the year 1648 that the matter was actually taken up. The General Assembly in that year employed Mr David Leitch on a paraphrase of “the songs of the Old and New Testament.” The proposal was interrupted by the persecution, but was renewed as soon as the Church obtained peace at the Revolution ; and “its stoppage then,” says the younger M’Crie, “may be traced to the decline of public and personal piety in Scotland.”<sup>1</sup> In his “Story of the Scottish Church,” the same writer says : —“In 1742, owing in some degree to the Cambuslang revival, a desire was shown to add some metrical pieces to the Psalms to be used in public worship ; and a committee was appointed to prepare a few passages from Scripture for that purpose. The report of this committee was given in the year 1745 ; but the unsettled state of the country at that time prevented any progress till 1749, when the Assembly agreed to transmit the collection, amounting to forty-five, to presbyteries, and leave the use of them to the option of Sessions. The collection thus made was, upon the whole, creditable to the parties employed on it, both in point of composition and design. It breathed throughout an evangelical tone of sentiment, and conveyed, though in simple rhymes, the spirit of the sacred text.” The following verses from

<sup>1</sup> Letter in Arnot’s “Life of Hamilton,” p. 540.



the paraphrase on Rom. viii. 31-39, may be given as a specimen :—

“ What shall we say to all these things ?  
 If God be on our side,  
 Who ever shall against us be,  
 What ill can us betide ?  
 He who, not sparing His own Son,  
 Up for us all Him gave,  
 Will He not with Him freely give  
 All things that we should have ?

“ Who shall charge them with anything  
 That God’s elected are ?  
 He that doth justify is God :  
 Condemn them then who dare ?  
 Christ—He hath died ; yea, rather is  
 Arisen for our sake ;  
 Who even at God’s right hand for us  
 Doth intercession make.”

“ But forty years, during which this collection served to guide the devotions of the people, had wrought their changes in the tastes and sentiments of the Church. A little before 1781, the leading clergy, who had gradually shifted away from the simple faith of their fathers, began to feel dissatisfied with the old translations and paraphrases ; and a new committee, containing the names of John Logan, Hugh Blair, and Cameron, were appointed to revise them.” Revised and enlarged so as to embrace sixty-seven pieces, this collection of sacred poems was, on the 1st June 1781, retransmitted for the consideration of presbyteries ; and, “ in the meantime,” the Assembly “ allowed it to be used in public worship in congregations where the minister should find it for edification.”

“This caution,” says the late Dr Jamieson of Glasgow, “was necessary, for the people at large, and many even of the clergy of the period could not be reconciled to its introduction, on the ground of strong conscientious scruples to employ in the praise of God any composition that flowed from an uninspired source.”<sup>1</sup> These feelings soon died away in the Established Church, but continued to prevail in one section at least of the Secession. “The people,” says Dr M’Crie, speaking of the period succeeding the Revolution, “acquired for our Psalter that veneration with which they regarded all that had been practised by our persecuted ancestors ; and the Seceders in particular regarded adherence to it as a part of ‘the covenanted uniformity.’”<sup>2</sup> In 1748, however, about fourteen years after the rise of the Secession, and immediately after its division into two branches, the Synod of the Burgher Church “recommended to Mr Ralph Erskine the work of turning Scripture passages into metre” for congregational use ; and, this work having been accomplished by him, a Committee was appointed to examine his productions, and report concerning them ; but “before the Committee had time to fulfil their appointment, Mr Erskine died, and the Synod did not think it proper to take any further steps in the matter.”<sup>3</sup> In 1812, the Burgher Synod allowed the Church of Scotland’s collection to be used in their own congregations ;

<sup>1</sup> “The Religions of the World,” p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Letter in “Life of Hamilton.”

<sup>3</sup> M’Kerrow’s “Hist. of the Secession Church,” vol. ii. p. 215. The Scripture songs were afterwards published as part of Mr Erskine’s works.

but it never came into use among the Anti-burghers. In 1798, a declaration was issued by the Anti-burgher or General Associate Synod in reference to Sabbath-schools, warning parents against "sending their children to such schools, if hymns of human composure were sung in them." In the Testimony emitted in 1804, they "condemn and testify against the doctrine of those who, maintaining that 'many of the Psalms of David are inconsistent with the spirit of the Gospel,' have laid them aside as unfit to be sung in Christian assemblies, and have in various instances introduced in their room hymns of human composition containing erroneous doctrine." There is here no express mention of the Paraphrases; but, probably, the statement was to be understood as referring, though not exclusively, to them; for some of them were regarded as having an Arminian taint, and as being chargeable with other grave blunders of a theological character.<sup>1</sup> In the United Secession Church, the Paraphrases soon came to be sung probably in most of the congregations; but some of them for a considerable time still adhered exclusively to the use of the Psalms.

#### HYMN BOOKS.

In 1794, a Hymn Book was sanctioned by the Synod of the Relief Church, "with the view of allowing greater variety to the expressions of devotional feeling in the

<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, as Mr Landreth remarks, "many pieces in the collection are purely descriptive or sentimental, and lack the elements of Christian adoration and thanksgiving."—"Life of Dr A. Thomson, of Coldstream," p. 371.



Christian songs of praise.”<sup>1</sup> Immediately after the union of the United Secession and Relief Churches, which took place in 1847, the attention of the Synod having been called to the Psalmody of the United Presbyterian Church, a Committee was appointed to take the subject into consideration ; and this Committee having reported in recommendation of the enlargement of the Psalmody in the form of a volume of Hymns and Paraphrases, it was entrusted with the preparation of such a volume. In the prosecution of this work the Committee were engaged till 1851, when, as the result of their labours, a Hymn Book, which contained above four hundred and sixty compositions, including a selection from the Paraphrases, was published by authority of the Synod, and in the course of a few years this Hymn Book was in almost universal use in the United Presbyterian Church. The congregation with which the writer is connected belonged originally to what was considered “the most straitest sect of our religion ;” yet no obstacle was encountered in introducing a Hymn Book that was sanctioned by the supreme Court of the Church. There was only one individual who positively refused to accept it, but he did not on this account think it necessary for him to leave the Church ; and, being asked what he did when a hymn was given out to be sung, he said that “he just took some psalm instead, though he sometimes found it somewhat difficult to accommodate the psalm to the tune.” In 1876, a new Hymn Book, sanctioned by the Synod, was issued, bearing the title, “The Presbyterian Hymnal,

<sup>1</sup> “The Religions of the World,” p. 208.

compiled by a Committee of the United Presbyterian Church ;” and this, I believe, is now used universally in the urban, and very generally in the rural congregations. Each of the two other large Presbyterian Churches, the Established and the Free, has now a Hymn Book of its own.

Probably, in most of our congregations, the Psalm Book still retains the primary place that is due to it : but is there no danger of its being degraded, or even superseded? If this should occur it would be a great and sad calamity. “When we have sought all around,” says Calvin, “searching here and there, we shall find no songs better and more suitable than the Psalms of David, which the Holy Spirit dictated and gave to him. And therefore, when we sing them, we are as certain that God has put words into our mouths as if He Himself sung within us to exalt His glory.” Undoubtedly, the songs that were composed “in old time” by “holy men of God, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,” will ever remain the best, and most fit to be used in the service of praise ; and it has been justly remarked by an able expositor, that “the more the Christian knows of God, and of himself, and of the Book of Psalms, the more will he delight in these wonderful compositions, and feel their transcendent poetic beauty, and wealth of religious experience.”<sup>1</sup> “I am more inclined than I once was,” said the late Dr John Duncan, “to admit the utility of our having a few hymns for expressing the clearer objective revelation of the great facts of Christ’s history and work.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Johnstone’s “Lect. on the Ep. of James,” p. 398.

But no hymn book I have seen gives every phase of subjective religion with the fulness, distinctness, and appropriateness of the Psalms." "Every emotion of the renewed heart Godwards finds adequate expression in the Book of Psalms."<sup>1</sup> But even considered in the former aspect, the Psalter is still transcendently excellent. What hymn books give so elevated and expansive views as the Psalms do, of the works and ways of God, of the mystery of redemption, or of the reign of the Messiah, and its blessed and glorious results?

I have heard of an old minister, who, when a young and inexperienced brother said that often he could not find a psalm suited to his sermon, and was glad to avail himself of a hymn, replied, "That may be ; but if so, the fault must be ascribed to yourself or your sermon, and not to the Psalms." This remark was doubtless intended rather as a vindication of the Psalms than as a reproof of the person to whom it was addressed ; and though in the one view it was perhaps too severe, yet in the other it was as just as it was strong.

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Dr Duncan," by Dr Brown, p. 539.

## CHAPTER II.

### *PRAISE, OR THE SERVICE OF SONG—continued.*

#### PRECENTOR AND CHOIR.

A WRITER in the "Homiletic Quarterly" (vol. i. p. 312), remarks, "If a minister has skill in music, and if his voice and strength would permit, no more proper person could be selected as leader (in the service of song) than the pastor himself. In a few cases this has been done; but it makes the services of the sanctuary very severe on the pastor." The usual plan is to choose some other person fit for the service; and this official is called "the precentor," a term literally signifying "one who sings before." "The precentor," says Eadie, "belonged to the old religious houses, and still holds office in cathedrals. The choir service is under his charge, and in dignity he is next the dean. The duties of the precentor in Scotland have been greatly curtailed. He seems to have succeeded to the reader of earlier times. It was the habit of the precentor to repair to church about half-an-hour before the minister came, and read to the people several passages of Scripture.

When the minister entered, the precentor gave out a psalm and led the singing. After the beginning of last century, he ceased by degrees either to read the Scriptures or prescribe the psalm. But his desk is still, from its original use, called by the old people the 'lectern' (pronounced 'lettern'), that is, the reading-desk." The precentor is now very commonly aided by a choir, or select band of singers, who in some cases are placed immediately before or around him, and in others, at the opposite end of the church, and in the gallery, where there is one.

The writer already quoted says, "Singing in church is a very difficult matter to manage aright. It has long been so. Job Orton, in a letter to a young curate, says, 'I am sorry for the trouble and vexation you have had, and are likely to have, with your eccentric singers. They are in general conceited, troublesome fellows, and have no more religion than an organ or a fiddle. And I wish the Doctor, when he comes to you, may be able to bring them to order. But steadiness, and not yielding to them, is the only way to humble them. I would propose, in the meantime, that you talk calmly and seriously to them separately, and endeavour to give them better notions than they have of the nature and design of psalmody; and, particularly, urge upon their consciences a reverence for the presence of God, and how affronting it must be to Him to have the church turned into a theatre, and divine worship into a farce.' This is but a specimen of the complaints that are even now made in many places on the subject." I do not suppose that there is the same

occasion for such complaints in any of the Scottish Presbyterian Churches ; but here, too, as well as in England, “great prudence and vigilance are necessary to avoid serious evils proceeding from choirs ;” and the suggestions made by this writer are such as will, if followed, effectually prevent the worst of these evils. “First, let not the proper authorities give up the matter to others. They may not be musical, but they may yet know that certain things are unedifying. They are charged with maintaining the gravity and decency of God’s worship ;” and they cannot divest themselves of this responsibility. “Secondly, if possible, secure for a leader a man of serious and earnest piety. This will of itself set aside half the difficulties of the case. His example and influence will do much good.” In both these ways evil is guarded against in the United Presbyterian Church, and I suppose in the other Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, by such a rule as the following :—“The election of a precentor is a matter of ecclesiastical business. No step can be taken towards choosing those who shall appear before the congregation as candidates, until the Session is satisfied as to their moral and religious character. In the mode of conducting the psalmody, as well as in other matters connected with his office, the precentor is subject to the control, and bound to obey the orders of the Session.” The precentor is required to be a member of the congregation ; and, though the choir is frequently composed in considerable part of young persons not yet in full communion, yet, commonly, they are in attendance on the minister’s class,



and are often such as specially afford hope of their becoming useful and ornamental members of the church. A third suggestion is, that it be often stated “ that the great object of any arrangements respecting a leader or a choir is to bring the congregation as far as possible to unite in this delightful service.” Happily, in our public assemblies still, as in former days, the great body of the people, following the precentor after he has uttered the first notes, take a personal share in singing the praises of God ; but they are not yet generally impressed, as they should be, with the obligation resting on them to qualify themselves for performing this service in a becoming manner. That great divine, Jonathan Edwards, observes, that, “ as it is the command of God that all should sing, so all should make conscience of learning to sing, as it is a thing that cannot decently be performed at all without learning. Those, therefore, where there is no natural inability, who neglect to learn to sing, live in sin, as they neglect what is necessary in order to their attending one of the ordinances of God’s worship.” How greatly, then, do they sin who can sing, but do not join in this service, who, from pride, or indifference, or any other cause, are wilfully dumb in the house of God !

## PSALM TUNES.

Calvin, who was the first in the Reformed Church to provide the whole book of Psalms in the metre of any living language for the use of the people in the praises of the sanctuary, was also the first who supplied a true and distinctive music to which they should be sung in con-

gregational worship. They were at first sung to all sorts of tunes, including those of profane and licentious songs. Calvin's soul revolted against this practice ; and he set to work to remedy so great an evil. He applied to the first musicians in Europe to furnish him with tunes worthy of the words of the Psalms ; and of those obtained by him, many remain unsurpassed for simplicity, beauty, and grandeur.<sup>1</sup>

For circulating the Reformed opinions in Scotland, "the most singular measure adopted," says M'Crie, "was the composition of 'Gude and Godly Ballates, changed out of prophaine songs.' The title sufficiently indicates their nature and design. The air, the measure, the initial line, or the chorus of the ballads sung by the people at that time, were transferred to hymns of devotion."<sup>2</sup> They were intended "for the use of young persons, and such as are nocht exercisit in the Scripture, quha will sooner conceive the true word nor quhen they hear it sung in Latin, the quilk they know nocht what is. But when they hear it, or sayes it themselves in their vulgar tongue, with sweet melodie, then shall they love God, and put away unclean sangs." On referring to these Ballates, says the writer of an article on Scottish Psalmody in the *Evangelical Review*,<sup>3</sup> "We can trace a number of the tunes to which they were sung, some of which are still familiarly known to us, such as, 'Wha's at the Window, Wha, Wha?' 'Up in the mornin's no for me,' 'The hunt is up, the hunt is up,' 'Hey trix, tryme go

<sup>1</sup> *Br. and For. Ev. Review*, Jan. 1879.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of John Knox," vol. i., Note K.

<sup>3</sup> Jan. 1879.



trix, under the grene wode tree.’” The following specimens will give some idea of these compositions :—

“Up in the morning early,”—

“The wind blaws cauld, furious, and bauld,  
This long and mony a day ;  
But Christ’s mercie ye maun all dree,  
And keep the cauld wind away.”

“The hunt is up,”—

“The hunt is up, the hunt is up,  
It is now perfect day ;  
Jesus, our King, is gone a hunting :  
Wha likes to speed they may.”

To “Tuttie Taittie” was sung, —

“Hey now the day dallies,  
Now Christ on us calles,  
And welth on our wallis  
Appears anon ;  
Now the Word of God rings,  
Quhilk is King of all kings ;  
Now Christ’s flock sings,  
The night is near gone.”<sup>1</sup>

When the metrical psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins were adopted in the congregation of English exiles at Geneva, of which John Knox was minister, it was found that many of the tunes of the Genevan-French Psalter could not be made available, in consequence of the peculiar rhythms used in it. Other melodies of the same character were then or subsequently introduced ; and these early Psalters thus contained a large quantity of music, consisting chiefly of what are called “proper

<sup>1</sup> Mitchison’s “Hand-Book of the Songs of Scotland.”

tunes," or a special tune for each psalm. In addition to these, there appeared, in the Scottish Psalter of 1635, a collection of thirty-one common tunes.<sup>1</sup>

"The loss of these majestic and thrilling harmonies, without the substitution of any others," it has been remarked, "commenced that course of deepening neglect and decrepitude in this delightful part of the worship of God, which the spiritual apathy of the eighteenth century only accelerated and confirmed, and from which we are only now slowly recovering."<sup>2</sup> So great was the declension in the psalmody of the Scottish churches, that at one time, it is said, there were only eight tunes that were allowed to be used, or that were commonly used, in public worship. An old Seceder, many years ago, having told me this, I asked him the names of the tunes. He mentioned the most of them, but could not remember them all. Perhaps, I said, St Paul's was one of them. "St Paul's!" he exclaimed; "do ye think they would have sung a saunt's tune in those days?" I then mentioned Coleshill. "No, no," he said; "Coleshill is just a licht way of singing Dundee."<sup>3</sup> The tunes were French, Dundee, Stilt or York, Newton, Elgin, London, Martyrs, Abbey. I do not know how long it is since these tunes ceased to enjoy exclusively the honour of being sung in the sanctuary. But at a time not far remote, the introduction of a new tune

<sup>1</sup> *Br. and For. Ev. Review*, Oct. 1870.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, July 1857.

<sup>3</sup> See a note to Article on "Church Song" in *Br. and For. Ev.* 1870, p. 797.

was apt to give offence to the older people ; and I remember being told that, on one occasion, the precentor in the congregation with which I am connected, having in the forenoon sung a tune then recently composed, the elders were so highly displeased that they determined he should be kept out of the desk in the afternoon, and one of themselves should take his place. The gravest of these seniors, accordingly, went into the desk ; and with the view, perhaps, of counteracting as much as possible the evil that had been done, or of exhibiting a most emphatic testimony against it, he chose a very old and venerable tune to begin with ; but, being one that had been out of use for a generation or more, it was known to few or none of the people ; and not only so, but he seemed to have forgotten it himself, and, after some painful and unsuccessful attempts to proceed, would have stuck altogether, had not the displaced and disgraced precentor generously come to his aid. I remember an old farmer lamenting, evidently with a feeling of very tender regard for them, that “ many of the auld tunes were now sair driven aside.” Some of these have retained or have been of late restored to their former honourable place in the psalmody ; but I do not remember to have ever heard sung in church either of the two tunes which Burns has signalised in the well-known lines,—

“ Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name,  
 Or Elgin beets the heavenward flame,—  
 The sweetest far of Scotia’s holy lays ;”

and Coleshill, too, the tune that was always sung on sacramental Sabbaths, while the table-seats were being

filled, seems to have gone with the occasion to which it was appropriated. It is well that "repeating tunes" have been banished; especially such as were in vogue for a time, in country churches at least,—“rants,” in which half lines, and sometimes two or even three of the lines in a verse, were sung twice or thrice over,—no regard being paid to the fitness of things, and clauses and words being sometimes divided in a manner exceedingly ludicrous. Often, however, it was not from distaste of such tunes either on æsthetic or religious grounds, but simply from aversion to all innovation, that, when any one of them was sung, many of the older people closed their books, and some even rose and walked out.

The practice of chanting the psalms has recently been adopted in a number of our churches. In some of them, this is confined to the metrical version; but in others, the prose psalms are used, and it would be well if ability to chant them were to become common in all our Scottish churches, and the entire congregation brought to join in this mode of performing the service of praise.

The ancient mode of singing among the Hebrews is indicated by the song of the seraphim in Isaiah's vision. "One cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." They sang responsively. Miriam and the daughters of Israel responded to the song of Moses; at the rebuilding of the temple, the priests and Levites "sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord;" and many of the psalms obviously consist of recitative and chorus, or are distributed into parts, to be sung by

the ministers of religion and the people separately; and some of them are adapted to three orders, the priests, the Levites, and the people. The people, by joining in the chorus, were considered as adopting the whole psalm. The imitation of the Jewish mode seems to have been common in the primitive Christian Church; and it may be referred to by the apostle when he exhorts Christians to “speak to one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts unto the Lord.” It was by this practice that the Jews and the Christians in early times were able, without fatigue, and with great pleasure, to go through whole psalms in the same act of praise; and the revival of it might be considered a greater improvement in our public praise than the introduction of instrumental music.

#### THE READING OF THE LINE.

In one of his poems, Allan Ramsay speaks of “the letter-gae of holy rhyme.” The phrase “letter-gae” is thus explained in Jamieson’s Dictionary:—“The precentor or clerk in a church; he also raises the tune, and, according to the old custom in the country, reads every line before it be sung.” Some still living can remember this custom. “It was of course necessary, in order to keep himself in tune, that the precentor should read in the key of the tune he had chosen; and thus the service of praise was often a curious compound of chanting and singing.”<sup>1</sup> This was not a part of the original mode

<sup>1</sup> Brown’s “Life of a Scottish Probationer,” p. 113.



of performing the service of song in the Scottish Church, but was authorised by the Westminster Assembly in those cases in which there might be "many in a congregation who could not read," or who were "disabled by age or otherwise." This act of toleration was yielded with much reluctance by the Commissioners from the Scottish Church, the people in Scotland, unlike those in England, being so well instructed that they could sing the sacred songs even "without buik." "Then," says Lightfoot, in his Journal of the Assembly, "was our directory read over to the Scots Commissioners, who were absent at the passing of it; and Mr Henderson disliked our permission of any to read the psalm line by line; and this business held us in some debate."<sup>1</sup> Mr Landreth, in his Life of Dr Thomson of Coldstream, remarks that the practice was introduced out of consideration, not only for persons unable to read, but for those who were "without large-printed books which age-weakened eyes could read, for many decent folks had a strange dislike against taking *spectacles* to church."

The practice was not peculiar to the Presbyterian Churches. Mr Stanford, in his "Philip Doddridge," states that in that distinguished minister's church, "the hymn sung after the sermon was generally one composed by him for the occasion, and the precentor used to give it out, and read it line by line." There was a necessity for this being done in such a case as that which is here mentioned; but the writer adds, "This was not merely a non-conformist practice. We find, for instance, from the

<sup>1</sup> M'Crie's "Story of the Scottish Church," p. 167.

note made by a visitor, that it was the custom in the neighbouring Collingtree Parish Church. Bishop Gibson specially instructed the clerk to do this, first in his Charge of 1721, and again in 1744."

Mr Landreth states that "in the Burgher Secession, the precentor read two lines at a time, but in the Anti-Burgher only a single line." This, however, of course, was not one of the essential points of difference between the two denominations, it being, certainly, not of much greater importance than that which I remember hearing the late Dr Fairbairn of Newhaven say was the only difference that he, when a boy, could discover between the Burghers and the Anti-Burghers in his native town, namely, that the meeting-house of the one body had a thatched, and the other a tiled roof.

This practice established itself so firmly that it continued to be observed long after the principal reason for its introduction had ceased to exist; and when at length the discontinuance of it was urged, the proposal called forth a resistance almost as vehement as it might have been expected to be, had the contemplated change involved the abolition of singing itself. Even individuals who were distinguished for Christian intelligence as well as for piety, were wont to stigmatise the practice of continuous singing, or *run-line*, as it was popularly called, as an innovation which it would be highly criminal to tolerate, and sometimes, when an instance of it occurred, testified their displeasure by closing their books with as much demonstration, visible and audible, as they could make, or even by hurrying out of the church, as if it had

been utterly profaned. The introduction of run-line was often the occasion of individuals leaving the Established and joining the Secession Church. Many congregations were in this way considerably increased ; and in two instances, the persons seceding were so numerous as to form a congregation at once.<sup>1</sup> A relative of mine, a worthy old lady, having asked one of my brothers how the service of praise was conducted in his father's church, and being informed that the line was read in the forenoon and afternoon, but not, when there was a third diet of worship, in the evening, said to him, " Well, my man, let me tell you, ye have the praise of God through the day, but man's praise at night." Another relative I find spoken of in an old letter as " having a capital head " for agricultural affairs, " however much beclouded on such points as run-line, witches, and the Union ;" and I have been told that this individual, who was a really estimable man, left the Secession congregation, with which he had been connected from his childhood, on account of the introduction of run-line, repeating tunes, and the use of the Paraphrases, and that, when a friend remarked to him that he would find all these evils existing in a greater degree in the Established Church, to which he had gone, he replied, " True ; but we cannot expect so much good there." His desertion, however, was but temporary. In the " Life of a Scottish Probationer," the author, having stated that " Scripture was ransacked to find texts in support of the ancient custom," mentions one remarkable instance of this : " To a deputation from the Glasgow Presbytery,

<sup>1</sup> M'Kelvie's " Annals of the United Presbyterian Church."



which had been sent to visit a congregation where dissension prevailed on the grave question, the words of the 19th Psalm, 'Their line is gone out through all the earth,' were quoted as undoubted Scripture authority for the reading of the line." It is difficult to believe that the opponents of the innovation were serious in the appeal thus made to the language of Scripture; and yet it cannot be supposed that they were following the example of an eminent divine of the Secession Church, of whom it is told that, when an unintelligent but conceited individual was strongly objecting, for very nonsensical reasons, to the practice of publishing moderations, calls, and other ecclesiastical transactions, in the secular newspapers, he reminded him of the apostolic injunction, "Let your moderation be known unto all men."

It is strange to find among the English Baptists a strikingly analogous, yet very different, example of resistance to supposed innovations in public worship. In Mr Spurgeon's "History of the Metropolitan Tabernacle," the author says, "Because from fear of discovery by the magistrate, the assemblies of believers had been unable to sing, the habit of songless worship had been acquired in many congregations; and when happier days gave opportunity for praising the Lord with the voice, the older folks looked upon it as an innovation, and would have none of it." Mr Keach, one of Mr Spurgeon's predecessors (the author of two well known folios, "Key to open Scripture Metaphors," and an "Exposition of the Parables"), obtained his people's

consent to the practice of singing, first, at the conclusion of the Lord's Supper; next, about six years after, in public thanksgivings,—in which limitation they continued about fourteen years; and at length, “by a regular act of the Church, it was agreed to sing the praise of God every Lord's-day:” but still there were some that dissented, and “they withdrew, and founded another church, upon the same principles, *singing only excepted.*”<sup>1</sup>

In some congregations, the practice of reading the line, before being abolished altogether, was continued for some time in the opening service of praise. This, I suppose, was done for the sake of those who, coming in late, lost the opportunity of hearing the announcement of the psalm. But these individuals, with perhaps a few exceptions, deserved no such consideration, and should have been admonished to make it a part of their religion, as a good woman said she made it of hers, not to disturb other people in theirs; an admonition this, however, which the discontinuance of the old custom has by no means rendered unnecessary.

#### ATTITUDE IN PRAISE.

The primitive Christians, in their religious assemblies, “stood as they sang, for this was regarded as the only proper and becoming attitude.”<sup>2</sup> In the congregations of the Secession Church, as in those of other Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, the people were accustomed to sit

<sup>1</sup> See an article, by Dr James Hamilton, in the *Br. and For. Ev. Review*, April 1865.

<sup>2</sup> Eadie's “*Eccl. Cycl.*,” Art. *Psalmody*.

at psalms. I was surprised to find, from an article on "Singing Praise," in the "Christian Magazine for 1819, that there had before that time been some exceptions, there being in that article the following inquiry, "What is the reason why some of our congregations should stand, and others sit, during this part of Divine worship?" The writer afterwards remarks, "The attitude of standing when offering praise to the Most High is certainly a very agreeable posture, more becoming such an exercise, and also appears to be countenanced by Scripture." Happening lately to look into one of the earliest volumes of that Magazine, I found an account of a mission to the North in 1800, in which it is stated that the brethren composing the deputation preached at Kirkwall in Orkney, where the people heard with great attention; and, says the writer, "their manner of praise is strikingly solemn, yet calculated to raise the affections, and diffuse ardour and activity through the assembly. It is the manner of the Church in the days of Nehemiah, chap. ix. 5. They all rise when they praise, and sing also without reading the line." Standing during the service of song was the custom in the church which I attended when a student in Edinburgh—the Potterrow, then under the ministry of the Rev. Dr John Ritchie; but I do not remember to have seen it practised anywhere else. It has now been introduced into many of the congregations of the United Presbyterian Church, in the country, as well as in the towns; and in all probability, it will ere long be found to have commended itself to universal adoption, as a real and important improvement.

## PREFACING THE PSALM.

This was the expression usually employed to designate the practice of making expository remarks on the psalm, or portion of a psalm, to be sung at the commencement of public worship, these remarks being accompanied with appropriate devotional reflections. This practice has now become very rare, if not quite obsolete. When rightly performed, it was well fitted to delight and edify pious and intelligent worshippers, and to make "the service of song in the house of the Lord" a service at once of the understanding and the heart. In Mr Cairns's interesting "Memoir of the late Rev. Dr Smith of Biggar," it is stated that "in this way the whole of the Psalms were regularly gone over by" that excellent minister; "and the gathered fruit of these 'prefaces' is to be found in 'The Devotional Psalter,' one of Dr Smith's earlier publications." This part of the service, however, was not, I suspect, always so edifying as the readers of Dr Smith's book may be apt to suppose it to have been. Sometimes, perhaps often, little or no preparation for it was made; and it was performed in such a manner as to be almost in no degree calculated to answer its purpose. I have heard of a minister who on one occasion happened to turn over two leaves of his psalm book together, and felt, he afterwards said, no small difficulty in making out the connection, but thought he had succeeded in doing so, till, on the psalm being sung, he of course discovered

his mistake. This, however, was no doubt an instance altogether unique, and not to be regarded as a specimen.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An instance of blundering, scarcely less strange, I remember to have occurred at family worship in a minister's house, where the "big ha' Bible" was a folio containing the Apocrypha. A preacher conducting the service read a chapter of Ecclesiasticus, which he supposed to be one of Ecclesiastes. The same volume—an old pulpit Bible—was being used at the Tent on one occasion when the late Dr John Ritchie preached ; and, in consequence of an emphatic stroke of his hand, the book-board gave way, and the Bible fell to the ground. Being afterwards asked why he knocked it down, he replied, "I saw the Apocrypha was in it."

## CHAPTER III.

*PRAISE, OR THE SERVICE OF SONG—continued.*

### INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.

**I**NSTRUMENTAL music, though not quite coeval with man, as we may conceive vocal music to have been, yet claims a high antiquity. The first mention of it in the Scriptures occurs in the account of the family of Lamech, the sixth from Adam in the line of Cain. Lamech, we are told, had a son named Jubal, who was “the father of all such as handle the harp and the organ,” that is, the inventor of musical instruments. The Scriptures do not inform us at what time instrumental music began to be connected with religious worship. We are told that when, on the overthrow of Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea, Moses and the children of Israel sang a song of thanksgiving and triumph, “Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances,” and joined in celebrating the signal display of Divine power in their behalf; and from this it may be presumed that musical instruments had previously



been used in religious worship. Moses was commanded to make two silver trumpets for the purpose of directing the march of the tribes in the wilderness ; and at the same time it was intimated that, after their settlement in the promised land, these instruments were to be employed on several important occasions connected with the observance of their sacred rites. David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel," was a great musician. The prophet Amos, in denouncing "woe to them that are at ease in Zion," speaks of them as "chanting to the sound of the viol, and inventing to themselves instruments of music, like David." There is here no censure of David : the comparison is manifestly ironical, and is to be understood as implying a contrast between the royal psalmist and the grandees of Israel in the days of the prophet : they were selfish and abandoned to sensual pleasure, consulting only their own gratification, and that of those who joined their giddy circle ; but David devoted his musical talent to the glory of God.<sup>1</sup> In the first book of Chronicles, we

<sup>1</sup> Henderson. No doubt, the example of David would be abused, or profanely appealed to by such men ; and there may have been some in his own time who were disposed to censure him for his devotedness to music. Such was the experience of the author of the "Gospel Sonnets," at one time so popular in Scotland. In illustration of Ralph Erskine's character, M'Crie gives the following traditional anecdote a place in his notice of him. "He was fond, it seems, of music ; and some of his more strait-laced hearers, feeling scandalised by a report that he played on the violin, a deputation of grave elders was appointed to wait upon him. Ralph produced the violoncello, and treated the elders to a solemn psalm tune, with which they were highly gratified, and assured the people that 'the minister did not play on the wee sinfu' fiddle they had imagined.'"—"Story of the Scottish Church," p. 472.



are told that, having given charge respecting the building of the temple, he settled the method of the temple-service, appointing four thousand Levites to praise the Lord with instruments which he had made ; and, again, it is stated that he “ separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy,” or praise, “ with harps, and psalteries, and with cymbals.” In his psalms, these instruments are often mentioned as accompaniments of song in public worship ; and in the hundred and fiftieth psalm, there is a full enumeration of the instruments employed, as consisting of three kinds,—wind, stringed, and pulsatile. “ Praise the Lord with the sound of the trumpet ; praise Him with the psaltery and harp ; praise Him with the timbrel and pipe ; praise Him with stringed instruments and organs ; praise Him upon the loud cymbals ; praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals.” In the account of the works of reformation effected by Hezekiah, we are told that he “ set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, according to the commandment of David ;” “ and the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.” And this part of public worship was revived, we find, on the return of the Jews from the Babylonish exile : at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the people “ sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps ;” and these are

described as “the musical instruments of David, the man of God.”

The use of instrumental music as a part of religious worship must be regarded as one of those ceremonies which were abolished by the introduction of the gospel dispensation; and there is no revival of this institution in the New Testament, mention being made in it of no other service of praise than that of song. “Be filled with the spirit,” says Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, “speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” The word rendered, “making melody,” literally signifies “playing on a stringed instrument;” and this passage has been adduced as furnishing an argument for the use of such music in the public worship of the Christian Church. It does not seem to be a satisfactory reply to this argument, to say that the term is used figuratively, the apostle enjoining Christians to make melody or play on a harp “in their heart;” for they are also directed here, as in the parallel passage in the epistle to the Colossians, to “sing in their hearts,” which no one understands as implying that they are not to sing with the voice. There can be no doubt, however, that the language is figurative, indicating what was to be the prime accompaniment of the singing, namely, the symphony of the soul. In the vision of John, recorded in the fifth chapter of the book of the Revelation, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders, the representatives of the ministers and members of the Christian Church, are said to “have had every one of

them harps.”<sup>1</sup> But we are not to regard their possession of harps as indicating that such instruments are to be employed in the service of God under the Christian dispensation, any more than we are to suppose that the burning of incense is still to form part of our worship, because the representatives of the Church are described as “having golden vials full of odours.” These vials are said to be “the prayers of saints ;” and, in like manner, the harps with which they are furnished denote their fitness or disposition for the service of praise, and the joyful emotions with which they perform it.

It is important to observe that, in ancient times, the religious use of instrumental music was peculiar to the temple service, and was not adopted in the worship of the synagogue ; and that, while it is only in a figurative sense that the Christian Church is called “the temple of the living God,” the several congregations of the Christian Church exactly correspond to the synagogues of the Jews ; the features of agreement in primitive times being “so marked and decided, that the Gentiles were often slow to recognise any difference between them, and reprobated the Christian Churches as being Jewish synagogues in disguise.”<sup>2</sup>

In the Christian Church, accordingly, instrumental music was unknown during at least the first six centuries. The ancient fathers were so far from practising or approv-

<sup>1</sup> The phrase “*golden* harps” has become common, and is often found in hymns ; but golden harps would not sound well, and the sacred writers are ignorant of them.

<sup>2</sup> King on “The Ruling Eldership,” p. 215. Miller’s “Office of the Ruling Elder,” chap. ii.

ing of it in Christian worship, that some of them would scarcely admit that it was used in the Jewish, but put allegorical interpretations on the texts in which it was mentioned. Even in the thirteenth century, we find Thomas Aquinas saying, "Our Church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to judaize. Nor ought a pipe, nor any other artificial instruments, such as an organ or harp, to be brought into use in the Christian Church, but only those things that shall make the hearers better men. Under the Old Testament, such instruments were used, partly because the people were harder and more carnal, on which account they were to be stirred up by those instruments, as likewise by earthly promises, and partly because these bodily instruments were typical of something." "This statement," says Dr Eadie, "may not refer to the entire Latin Church, but probably to some portion of it. In the Latin Church, organs were at length extensively used; and after the Reformation, the Lutheran and the Anglican Churches retained them."<sup>1</sup> But in the Lutheran Church, instrumental music was retained in opposition to the opinion of Luther himself, who reckoned organs among the ensigns of Baal; and in one of the Homilies of the Church of England, a person having been represented as saying, "Alas! what shall we now do at church, since all the saints are taken away, since all the goodly sights we were wont to have are gone, since we cannot hear the like piping, singing, chanting, and playing upon the organs?" the answer is, "But, dearly

<sup>1</sup> "Eccl. Cycl.," Art. *Organ*.

beloved, we ought greatly to rejoice, and give God thanks, that our churches are delivered out of all those things which displeased God so sore, and filthily defiled His holy house and place of prayer.”

The Presbyterian Churches in this country had, till recently, made strong and continued resistance against the use of instrumental music.<sup>1</sup> In the Church of Scotland the matter was discussed in connection with the use of an organ in the congregation of St Andrew's, Glasgow. The case was brought before the Presbytery of Glasgow in 1807; and the following motion was carried, no appeal being made, “That the Presbytery are of opinion, that the use of the organ in the public worship of God is contrary to the law of the land, and to the law and constitution of our Established Church, and therefore prohibit it in all the churches and chapels within its bounds.” In 1829, the question was brought up in the Relief Synod, as an organ had been introduced into Roxburgh Place Church, Edinburgh. The Synod declared this to be “an innovation unauthorised by the law of the New Testament, contrary to the universal practice of the Church of Scotland, and contrary to the consuetudinary laws of the Synod of Relief, and highly inexpedient.” An organ having been erected in the new Claremont Church, Glasgow, the same question came up in 1856

<sup>1</sup> “The organ was a great mark of distinction between Episcopalian and Presbyterian places of worship. I have heard of an old lady describing an Episcopalian clergyman, without any idea of disrespect, in these terms, ‘Oh, he is a whistle-kirk minister.’”—Dean Ramsay's “Reminiscences,” chap. ii.



before the United Presbyterian Synod ; and the Synod “refused the petition of the memorialists, inasmuch as the use of instrumental music is contrary to the uniform practice of this Church, and of the other Presbyterian Churches in this country, and would seriously disturb the peace of the churches under the inspection of this Synod.” The matter came before the Synod again in 1872, when the Court “declined to pronounce a judgment upon the use of instrumental music in public worship ;” yet declared that “uniformity of practice in this matter shall no longer be made a rule of the Church.” Toleration being thus granted, instrumental music has been introduced into many of the places of worship of the United Presbyterian Church, the harmonium being used when the expense of an organ prevents the higher attainment. In the Established Church, the same liberty has lately been conceded, and the result has been similar ; and one or more of the Presbyteries of the Free Church have agreed to transmit overtures to the General Assembly, proposing that “the subject of the employment of instrumental aid be taken into consideration, and liberty granted to congregations to employ it in the ordinary service of the sanctuary, where it can be done without endangering the peace of congregations, and the edification of the Church.”

Many years before the subject was taken up by the United Presbyterian Synod, the Professor of Pastoral Theology to the United Secession Church,<sup>1</sup> in a lecture to his students on Psalmody, when showing them how to

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Dr Duncan.

answer the objection to the permanent use of the Psalms founded on the frequent reference to musical instruments, said, "Let it, first of all, be cautiously remarked, that is, so as not to be misunderstood or justly give offence, that, while the very basis of the new economy is wholly incompatible with the offering of animal sacrifices, there is nothing in its principles, or in the prescription of its forms, opposed to the decorous use of instrumental music in praise, either for guidance or as an accompaniment;" but afterwards he proceeds to show that the phraseology of the Psalms, even as sung by the Jews, did not necessarily imply the use of instrumental music, and is susceptible of an interpretation similar to that which, when the Psalms are sung by us, is to be given of the expressions respecting animal sacrifices and the rites connected with oblation. These sacrifices were typical of the death of Christ, which, as actually accomplished, is now the grand subject of celebration in the Church; and they were also acts of worship, expressive of the sentiments and feelings of the worshippers; while, further, with the expiatory sacrifices there were connected eucharistic oblations, or sacrifices of thanksgiving; and both the typical nature of the legal system, and the analogy or correspondence between the worship of the Old and that of the New Testament state, warrant the continued use of those psalms which refer to the religious institutions of the ancient economy, and indicate the sense in which they are to be understood by us in singing them. The same or a similar principle of interpretation is applicable to the psalms in which instru-



ments of music are mentioned. These instruments, it is true, with the exception of the trumpets which Moses was commanded to make, had no typical meaning ; but the use of them in the service of praise was spiritually significant ; and the language of the psalms, when applied to the worship of the gospel age, is to be understood as importing that we are to praise God in the best manner of which we are capable, exulting in spirit before Him, summoning to His service all the faculties and powers, natural and gracious, of which we are possessed, and employing all appropriate means for stirring us up to engage in it with fervour and delight. With perfect propriety, therefore, may we, without instrumental music, make use, in the service of praise, of the psalms in which musical instruments are mentioned, as, indeed, did the Jews themselves ; for the songs of Zion, as some of them plainly indicate,—the ninety-second, for example,—were provided for domestic and personal, as well as for public use ; and we cannot suppose that all the Jews were furnished with the variety of expensive instruments referred to in the psalms.

The only legitimate ground on which the use of instrumental music in the worship of the Christian Church can be pleaded for is that indicated above, and more fully stated by a recent writer, who says, “ The employment of an organ to guide the music is properly not ritualistic at all. The leader has his pitch-pipe, and the hundred pipes of the organ only serve to guide and sustain the voice of the people. Nobody wishes to praise God by the mere sound of the organ ; its music only helps

and supports the melody and worship of the church.”<sup>1</sup> To substitute instrumental music for the voice would be a heinous offence. To use it in our assemblies as it was used under the ancient dispensation, when, in and through the music performed, the people offered homage to God, would be to violate the simplicity and spirituality by which the Christian dispensation is characterised. But there seems to be no impropriety in using it to aid the voice in psalmody, or to render this part of the service more impressive, and promote truly devotional feeling. Yet even in this view, it is confessedly not essential to the exercise of praise. As has already been stated, it was not enjoined or exemplified by the apostles; nor had it a place by voluntary adoption in the primitive churches. We have no notice of it in ecclesiastical history till that age of avowed reversion to judaism for the purpose of worldly aggrandisement, which introduced the hierarchy, and other forms of assimilation to the ancient ritual; and where it is in use, there must always be a danger of substituting, if not the symbolical for the real, yet the external for the spiritual, and even the instrumental for the vocal, which would require to be guarded against with peculiar vigilance.<sup>2</sup> “O God,” says the Psalmist, “my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake

<sup>1</sup> Eadie’s “Eccl. Cycl.,” Art. *Organ*.

<sup>2</sup> “Hic observandum: ut Ecclesia musicam non permittat fractam aut confragosam, quæ verba percipere non sinit, et ad aurium titillationem facit, non ad veram devotionem et gaudium spirituale, quicquam confert; quo etiam vergit usus Organorum pneumaticorum.”—Mastricht’s “Theol. Ascet.,” lib. ii. cap 7.

early." On this a well-known commentator remarks : —“ We ourselves must first be stirred up to make right use of the means, before the means can be fit to stir us up. As a man first tunes his instrument, and then plays on it, so should the holy servant of God first labour to bring his spirit, heart, and affections into a serious and fervent frame for worship, and then go to work.” It is thus only that, if an instrument be employed, it can aid in expressing, and tend to promote, devotional thoughts and feelings ; and it is thus only that the service of song can be acceptable to God and beneficial to ourselves. True piety, if it have its due influence, will undoubtedly prompt to the cultivation of a high degree of excellence in the outward performance of the service of praise ; and the attainment of this will tend to strengthen and elevate the devotional feelings of genuine worshippers. But mere music, whether vocal or instrumental, is but an empty sound.<sup>1</sup> “The most graceful execution and thrilling notes are a vain offering in themselves.” “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” They that celebrate His praise must “sing and make melody *in their heart* to the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Non vox, sed votum, non chordula musica, sed cor,  
Non cantus, sed amor, cantat in aure Dei.”

Versicle, quoted by Mollerus in Com. on the Psalms.

<sup>2</sup> The most extraordinary argument I have met with for the use of instrumental music is one that is noticed by Macaulay in his History. Henry Dodwell, Camdensian Professor of Ancient History in the University of Oxford, towards the end of the seventeenth century, “defended the use of instrumental music in public worship on the ground that the notes of the organ had a power to counteract the

influence of devils on the spinal marrow of human beings. In his treatise on this subject, he remarked that there was high authority for the opinion that the spinal marrow, when decomposed, became a serpent. Whether this opinion were or were not correct, he thought it unnecessary to decide. Perhaps, he said, the eminent men in whose works it was found meant only to express figuratively the great truth, that the old serpent operates on us chiefly through the spinal marrow."—Macaulay's "History of England," vol. v. pp. 87, 88.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *READING OF THE WORD.*

“**R**EADING of the Word in the congregation,” says the Westminster Directory, “being part of the public worship of God (wherein we acknowledge our dependence upon Him, and subjection to Him), and one means sanctified by Him for the edifying of His people, is to be performed by the pastors and teachers.” At the Reformation, the ancient office of “readers,” in a modified form, was continued in the Church of Scotland. There were persons employed to read the Scriptures to the people before the minister began the proper services of the Sabbath, and in some places, in the morning and evening of every week-day. They were also appointed to read the common prayers, but were not allowed to preach or administer the sacraments. “The readers were tempted now and then to overstep these limits, and were as often forbidden by the General Assembly, till, in 1581, the office was formally abolished.”<sup>1</sup> The Westminster Directory, accordingly, assigns this duty to the pastors and teachers. “How large a portion shall be read at once shall be left to the wisdom of the

<sup>1</sup> Eadie’s “Ecl. Cycl.”

minister; but it is convenient that ordinarily one chapter of each Testament be read at every meeting, and sometimes more when the chapters be short, or the coherence of matter requireth." In the church to which I belong, fifty or sixty years ago this prescription was not uniformly observed by all its ministers, and by many it was entirely neglected. An eminent minister of that church, when commencing this practice in 1821, deemed it necessary to make the following somewhat apologetic statement:—"Before prayer, I mean to read to you a portion of the Word of God. In adopting this practice, I am not taken by any sudden impulse, for it has been long a subject of deliberation, and is now resolved upon on grounds which I will state to you as the result of my own reflections; neither am I moved by any propensity to innovation, for the practice, it is well known, is not new; neither do I plead what may be considered as peculiar reasons for its existing in former times, as in the Jewish synagogue, or in the apostolic age," &c. "But, as the secret reading of the Word ought not to supersede its being read privately in the exercises of family worship, so neither ought this to set aside its being read in public; for the public reading of the Word of God seems to me an honour due to it, showing the respect in which we hold it, the high place we give to it in all acts of worship, and our deference to its authority independent of all exposition." "We thus, too, make sure that such portions of the Word as an overseer, acquainted with the state of the people, and disposed to consult their welfare, deems most necessary and suitable, are not overlooked," &c.



And further, “due account is to be made of the office of a gospel minister, by whom the Scriptures are thus read. It is an ordinance of Christ; and when, in the exercise of this office, your attention is turned to any portion of the Word of God, though but by reading it, then there is not only the authority of the Word, which you must have respected even in private, not only the deference due to a special call in Providence to attend to the portion of the Word laid before you, but there is all the weight of the instituted office by which God at the time lays this portion of His Word before you, and requires your attention to it,” &c.

This practice is now, I believe, universal in the public assemblies of all the Presbyterian Churches; but a considerable diversity obtains in the mode of performing it. In some cases the recommendation of the Directory is exactly complied with; in others only one chapter is read. In some congregations the reading of the Word precedes, and in others it follows the first prayer. In some the chapter is simply read, in others the reading is accompanied with explanatory remarks. I remember an excellent and venerable old minister, who, in his prayer at the close of the services on a Fast-day, when a comparatively young brother had occupied his pulpit, gave thanks for the hymns that had been sung, but added, “We like the Psalms better, and will often go back to them, and we are glad they have been so largely drawn upon to-day;” and then went on to give thanks particularly for “the penitential psalm that was sung at the commencement, and for the other penitential psalm that



was read, *though without note or comment,*" a clause this, which may have been subjoined simply as descriptive of the fact, but which might be supposed to have been intended to serve as a salutary reproof or admonition to the preacher. The Directory says, "When the minister who readeth shall judge it necessary to expound any part of what is read, let it not be done until the whole chapter be ended," an instruction which is probably to be regarded as based on the consideration of the honour and deference due to the inspired Word being thus more evidently indicated. The usefulness of this part of the service, when it consists simply in the reading of the Word, must of course depend very much on the manner in which the portion of Scripture is read. "Like other acts of worship, this may be performed in an unedifying manner. Some readers do terribly drawl out the words of Scripture. Others read in a hurried and confused way. Some sadly mumble all they read. Others read with great carelessness. The effect of such reading is pain to pious people, and contempt in the ungodly. Good reading makes an impression corresponding to the matter read." "The first requisite is, to be distinctly heard; the second is, to give the right emphasis, so as to give the true meaning; and the third is, to impress the truth thus taught on the minds of those who hear."<sup>1</sup> The late Dr John Brown's reading was singularly impressive, and admirably adapted to the use of copying; the remark was often made respecting it, that it was itself an exposition.

<sup>1</sup> "Homiletic Quarterly," vol. i. pp. 310, 311.

## CHAPTER V.

### *PRAYER.*

**P**RAYER was a principal part of religious worship under the Old Testament dispensation ; and it has been a principal part of the service in the assemblies of Christians from the beginning. “ It is an acknowledgment of God by those who are present ; an acknowledgment of their dependence upon Him, of their expectations from Him, of their desire for His grace, by which only the institutions of religion will be rendered effectual. On such occasions one necessarily speaks in the name of the rest ;” and it appears most convenient, suitable, and edifying, that ordinarily the pastor and teacher of a Christian congregation should lead its devotions ; but all are understood to join in the prayers. “ It is not the minister alone who prays, it is the congregation which addresses God by his mouth ; and every man should make the petitions his own by serious attention to them, and by stirring up the sentiments and affections of which they are expressive.”<sup>1</sup> In the public worship of the Jewish Church, the closing “ Amen ” seems

<sup>1</sup> Dick's “ Lect. on Theology,” xciv.

to have been uttered by the assembly at large.<sup>1</sup> In the book of Nehemiah we are told that when the people gathered themselves together to hear the book of the law of Moses read and expounded, "Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God; and all the people answered Amen, Amen, with lifting up of their hands;" and this custom appears to have been adopted by the primitive Christian Church, for the apostle, when reasoning with the Corinthians concerning the manner in which the gift of tongues was abused by some of them, says, "Else," that is, in case you do not speak intelligibly, "when thou shalt bless with the spirit; how shall he that occupieth the place of the unlearned say Amen," or, as the expression is, "Say the Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest." "This practice was continued for several centuries. Jerome relates that in his time the united Amen of the people in some of the larger churches sounded like the fall of water, or the noise of thunder. In many cases this response might be an unmeaning form. Its revival, however, might have the effect of making those who come to public worship more attentive to the prayers presented in their name for if they had any serious impressions at all, they would fear thus voluntarily to express their assent to petitions of which they knew little or nothing. They could not

<sup>1</sup> "The Talmudists taxed the people's negligence in prayer, saying that they used three sorts of *Amen*, and all faulty: *A faint Amen*, when they prayed without fervency; *a hasty Amen*, when they said *Amen* before the prayer was done; *a lazy Amen*, when they pronounced it at length, as if they were asleep, dividing the word *Amen*."—Godwyn's "Moses and Aaron," B. i. c. 2.

say Amen to prayers to which they had not listened, and in which they had not joined, any more than the Corinthians could say it to those which had been spoken in an unknown tongue. But though this practice does not prevail in our churches, it is not less the imperative duty of every worshipper so to attend to the public prayers offered in the name of all who are present, as to be able, with knowledge and with faith, mentally to say, Amen, so let it be, and so it will be.”<sup>1</sup>

#### FORMS OF PRAYER.

Prescribed forms appear to have been unknown in the early Christian Church. Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century, says, “The president,” or officiating minister, “pours out prayers according to his ability;” and Tertullian, in the third, says, “We look up to heaven with our hands stretched forth;” and again, “We pray without a monitor, because we pray from the heart.”<sup>2</sup> Presbyterians in general have rejected prescribed liturgies. “We do not indeed,” says Dr Miller, “consider the use of forms of prayer as in all cases unlawful. We do not doubt that they have been often useful, and that to many this mode of conducting public devotions is highly edifying. If any minister of our Church,” the American Presbyterian Church, “should think proper to compose a form of prayer, or a variety of forms, for his own use, or to borrow those which have been prepared by others, he ought to be considered as at perfect liberty to do so.

<sup>1</sup> Duncan’s “Pattern of Prayer,” note xii.

<sup>2</sup> Bennet’s “Theology,” &c., Lect. IV.

But we object to being confined to forms of prayer. We contend that it is of great importance to the edification of the Church that every minister be left at liberty to conduct the devotions of the sanctuary as his circumstances and the dispensations of Providence may demand." <sup>1</sup>

"At a meeting of the nobles and barons attached to the Reformation, held at Edinburgh in December 1557, it was agreed that they should rest satisfied for the present with requiring that prayers, and the lessons of the Old and New Testament, should be read in English, according to the 'buik of comon prayeris.'" In 1562, the Book of Common Order, first used by the congregation of English exiles at Geneva, was partially introduced; and by an act of the General Assembly in December 1564, it was appointed to be read by the curates, or, if they should refuse, by "the best qualified in the parochin." This, which has been called "Knox's Liturgy," having been composed by Knox on the basis of Calvin's, contains forms of prayer for the different parts of public worship; and "this," says M'Crie, "is the only resemblance which it bears to the English Liturgy. But there is this important difference between the two: in the English, the minister is restricted to the repetition of the very words of the prayers; in the Scottish, he is left at liberty to vary from them, and to substitute prayers of his own in their room. At the end of the account of the public service of the Sabbath, this instruction is subjoined: 'It shall not be necessarie for the minister daylie to

<sup>1</sup> "Presbyterianism," pp. 67, 68.



repeat all these things before mentioned, but, beginning with some manner of confession, to proceed to the sermon, which ended, he either useth the prayer for all estates before mentioned, or else prayeth as the Spirit of God shall move his heart, framing the same according to the time and matter which he hath entreated of.' The Scottish prayers, therefore, were intended as a help to the ignorant, not as a restraint upon those who could pray without a set form. The readers and exhorters commonly used them; but even they were encouraged to perform the service in a different manner."<sup>1</sup> This formulary, which was thus from the first simply the common basis, or the model, rather than the actual substance, of the public service of the Scottish Church, appears to have gradually fallen into disuse; and it was at length entirely superseded by the Westminster Directory, adopted by the General Assembly in 1645, which is simply a general code of regulations or instructions respecting the different parts of public worship, indicating, in regard to prayer, only the various appropriate subjects of confession, petition, and thanksgiving.

In the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, therefore, the public prayers are "without the shackles of prescribed forms. The custom of praying extempore is one of the religious practices of their ancestors, of which the Scottish people have always been peculiarly tenacious, and there is nothing which they are universally less willing to endure, or more prone to ridicule, than re-

<sup>1</sup> M'Crie's "Life of John Knox," 5th edition, vol. i., Note DD.

peated prayers.”<sup>1</sup> Thus wrote Dr Jamieson twelve years ago; but in the Church of which he was a distinguished minister, the practice of reading prayers is now not altogether unknown. In 1859, Dr Lee, minister of Old Greyfriars’ Church, Edinburgh, who had for some time been using a book, either in manuscript or printed, entitled “Prayers for Public Worship,” was enjoined by the Assembly “to discontinue the use of the book in question in the service of his church, and to conform, in offering up prayer, to the present ordinary practices of the Church.” But, in a letter which appeared in the *Daily Review* of September 14, 1881, it is stated that “in the cathedrals of Edinburgh and Glasgow, in Old Greyfriars’, and in many other churches where a high ritual is followed out, the prayers are read, and read out of a printed book.” This book, I suppose, is that entitled, “A Book of Common Order, being Forms of Worship issued by the Church Service Society,” of which a third edition, revised and enlarged, was published in 1874.

At the meeting of the United Presbyterian Synod in May 1881, an overture was presented from the Presbytery of Dundee, asking the Synod “to consider what steps might be taken to improve the devotional services of the Church, and, in particular, whether the Synod should not prepare a Directory of Public Worship.” There is here no express mention made of a Liturgy; but it seemed to be understood that the introduction of one, if not immediately, yet at no very remote time, was con-

<sup>1</sup> “Religions of the World,” p. 127.



templated by some of the authors or supporters of the overture.<sup>1</sup> The deliverance of the Supreme Court was, "That, having heard the overturists, the Synod declines to take any steps in the preparation of a Directory, but, recognising the great importance of the edifying conduct of the devotional exercises of the Church, recommends the subject to the prayerful consideration of ministers, and of Presbyteries in private conference." A prayer read, whether from a manuscript or a printed book, is still a thing unknown in the Dissenting Presbyterian Churches of Scotland. Doubtless, however, many of their ministers are in the habit of premeditating their public prayers, and thus of endeavouring to attain variety in the opening, as well as in the concluding part of the devotional services—a result to which the practice of reading the Scriptures before engaging in prayer is eminently conducive; and perhaps it would in many cases contribute to the "edifying conduct" of these services, that the prayers were privately pre-composed.

In the section of the Westminster Directory which

<sup>1</sup> "It is said of the late President Dwight, of Yale College, that when a brother clergyman inquired why they could not have a Liturgy as well as the Church people (of which they greatly stood in need to restrain the irregularities of worship), he simply answered him by the inquiry, 'Who shall prepare it?' And this is the difficulty which every person who has written on the subject has, tacitly at least, acknowledged. It is conceded on all sides that no Doctors in Divinity, no General Assemblies, nor Associations, in our day, are able to *compose* a Liturgy; but it is maintained that a Liturgy may be compiled out of pre-existing forms."—*The Church Review*, art. on the "Liturgical Movement" inserted in *Br. and For. Ev. Review*, April 1857.

relates to public prayer after sermon, it is said, "And because the prayer which Christ taught His disciples is not only a pattern of prayer, but itself a most comprehensive prayer, we recommend it also to be used in the prayers of His Church." Augustine expresses the opinion, "that Christ intended this prayer as a model, rather than a form,—that He did not mean to teach His disciples what words they should use in prayer, but what things they should pray for." No one can suppose that our Lord intended to confine His disciples to the use of this prayer, or to enjoin the constant and unvarying employment of it in all their devotions; and it seems evidently to have been designed chiefly to be a pattern or a guide,—a purpose which it is admirably adapted to answer. But that it was also intended to be a form, is apparently indicated by the language of our Lord in the Gospel of Luke, "When ye pray, say, Our Father," &c.; and even the phrase employed in Matthew's Gospel, which in our version is rendered, "after this manner," but may be rendered more simply, "thus," is used in Scripture in reference to the identical words that were spoken. It may be remarked, too, that, though our Lord had not expressly directed His disciples to employ the very words of this prayer, it would have been natural to consider them as the most proper that could be found to express the desires of their hearts. It was when discoursing on secret devotion that our Lord took occasion to deliver this prayer to His disciples; and from the fourth petition it may seem to have been intended

mainly for the domestic circle ;<sup>1</sup> but even in this, and plainly in all the other parts, it is suitable for the sanctuary as well as for the closet and the family. "We are sure that the ancients either used it alone, or prefixed it to their prayers when they used it. Thus Tertullian, after a large commendation of it, adds, 'We may add thereunto : ' 'having premised the lawful and ordinary prayer as a foundation, there is place for accidental requests.'"<sup>2</sup> "There is no doubt that in some churches, and particularly in the Church of England, the Lord's Prayer is improperly used, being introduced into the service unseasonably, and repeated over and over, as if there were supposed to be some magical virtue in the words."<sup>3</sup> But the abuse of it by superstition, or by formality, is no reason why we should entirely lay it aside, or "treat it as Hezekiah did the brazen serpent, which he broke in pieces, because it had been made the object of idolatrous regard."<sup>4</sup> Of the two opposite extremes, of apparently superstitious veneration or vain repetition and unbecoming exclusion or neglect, the latter was in past times much more extensively prevalent in Dissenting Presbyterian Churches than the former ; but now this prayer is very generally used once at least on every Sabbath in their public worship, either alone, or as the conclusion and summing up of their petitions.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dwight's "Theology," Ser. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson's "Defence of the Presbyterian Worship," p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> This is felt by the pious and intelligent in the Church of England themselves. See *The Churchman* for January 1882.

<sup>4</sup> Dick's "Lectures on Theology," xciv.

<sup>5</sup> An old minister, telling a newly licensed probationer, who was

## LENGTH OF PRAYERS.

An eminent Presbyterian divine, speaking of the Liturgy of the Church of England, says, "A serious objection is the shortness of the prayers. The longest is ended almost before you have time to bring your mind into a proper frame for joining in it; and some of them, consisting only of a single sentence, are finished almost as soon as they are begun."<sup>1</sup> If the prescribed forms in the English Liturgy are too short, the extemporaneous prayers in the Scottish Presbyterian Churches have generally been too long. This was the case, too, among the English Puritans. On a public fast-day, John Howe, Calamy tells us, "began with a prayer for about a quarter of an hour, in which he begged a blessing on the work of the day; after expounding a chapter, he prayed for an hour; preached for another hour, and prayed for half-an-hour;" after a short interval, "he prayed for another hour, preached, and then concluded the service of the day with about half-an-hour in prayer." This, however, was an extraordinary or special occasion, and, probably, the length of his prayers then is not to be regarded as an indication of his usual practice. Dr Jamieson says, "These," the opening and concluding prayers in the ordinary service of the Church of Scotland, "usually last to preach for him one day, how the services were usually conducted in his church, stated that between sermons he was accustomed to offer up the Lord's Prayer. But, asked the young man, may I not give something else? O yes, the minister replied, you may,—especially if you can give anything better.

<sup>1</sup> Dick's "Lectures on Theology," xciv.

for a quarter of an hour,—perhaps too great an effort for the generality of minds to engage with sustained attention in a pure act of devotion ;” yet “that space is not too long for overtaking all the topics which our public prayer ought to embrace.” Forty or fifty years ago, a somewhat longer space was usually occupied by the first prayer ; and special occasions were sometimes distinguished by its inordinate length. An eminent Secession minister in Glasgow whom I knew would, on the Sabbath after the Communion, pray for about forty minutes, his prayer being a kind of recapitulation of all the discourses which had been preached in connection with the dispensation of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>1</sup> It is now the practice of some ministers, who begin public worship with praise, to have two prayers preceding the sermon, one of which is offered up before or after a chapter of the Old, and the other before or after a chapter of the New Testament has been read ; and each of these prayers occupies only a few minutes. In the Book of Common Order issued by the Church Service Society, there is an approximation in form to the Liturgy of the Church of England ; but the prayers in the former, though brief, are still for the most part considerably longer than those in the latter.

<sup>1</sup> I remember at a congregational prayer meeting in a city church, about forty years ago, after a short discourse had been preached, an elder, who was called on to pray, engaging in this exercise for about half-an-hour, during which time he performed one complete rotation, and had gone through about a third part of another, when he came to a close, and seemed, on opening his eyes, to be not a little amazed at the change which had taken place in his relative position.



## PRAYER OF INVOCATION.

“The congregation being assembled,” says the Westminster Directory, “the minister, after solemn calling upon them to the worshipping of God, is to begin with prayer.” This direction, so far as I know, was not till recently observed in any of the congregations of the Church to which I belong. Public worship was always begun with service of song, from regard, probably, to the supposed import of the exhortation in the hundredth Psalm, “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise ;” and this exercise still takes precedence of all the rest in the congregations generally of the Established and Free Churches. The practice, however, has now been introduced in some of the United Presbyterian congregations of commencing with a short prayer, an invocation of the Divine presence and blessing. In the early ages, we are told, before the preacher began his discourse, he always invoked the Divine aid in a short prayer, which he was also accustomed to present in the course of his sermon when any point of unusual difficulty or great importance occurred ; and this practice might with great propriety be revived.

## ATTITUDE IN PRAYER.

“Before the Revolution, and about the time of the Revolution in England,” said Dr Rainy, in a speech in the General Assembly, “the Episcopalians generally stood at prayer, and the common imputation against the



Presbyterians was that they sat." But gradually, the practice of standing at prayer came in among the Presbyterians ; and this ere long prevailed universally, while the posture of sitting was substituted for that of standing at praise. The latter has now once more been introduced ; and this has rendered necessary a change of attitude in prayer, as it would be fatiguing to many or most worshippers to remain standing during both parts of the service. The pews in our churches are not so formed as to admit of kneeling ; and when standing at praise is practised, the worshippers sit during prayer, but bend forward in an attitude expressive of reverence and humility ; and this change, too, has been found an improvement, there being much less of that wandering of the eye, that looking around, during prayer, by which this part of Divine service has often been profaned by thoughtless and undevout individuals, while the truly pious worshippers have felt that they could more easily maintain throughout an earnest and undisturbed attention. An old writer says, "Standing is a posture not unfit for this worship, especially in places where we have not conveniency for the humbler gestures ; but sitting, or other postures of rest and laziness, ought not to be indulged, unless persons are aged or infirm, or the work of prayer be drawn out so long as to make it troublesome to human nature to maintain itself always in one posture." But sitting at prayer is not necessarily a posture of indolent repose any more than in hearing the Word, or observing the Lord's Supper ; nor can it be justly objected to as inconsistent with becoming reverence by any who

do not think it irreverent to sit during praise ; for in praise, as well as in prayer, we approach to God ; and it is essential to all acceptable worship, that we “ serve Him with reverence and godly fear.”

It has been urged as an objection to the use of this attitude, that there is no Scriptural warrant for it, such as there is for standing, as well as for kneeling. But, not to mention that the posture is not precisely that of sitting, it may be replied that there are instances recorded in Scripture in which we find this attitude exemplified. In the twentieth chapter of the book of Judges, we read that “ the children of Israel came into the house of God, and wept, and *sat* there before the Lord,” &c.; and in the seventh chapter of the second book of Samuel it is said, “ Then went king David in, and ‘ sat ’ before the Lord ; and he said, Who am I, O Lord God ? and what is my house,” &c. These texts, however, are by no means decisive.<sup>1</sup> But in the New Testament, we are told that in both the two instances in which our Lord miraculously fed the multitude, He commanded them to sit down on the ground, and then took the loaves and the fishes, and prayed giving thanks. It is still more important to notice that “ the prayers at the institution of the Lord’s Supper were offered while the first communicants were sitting. No intimation is given by the Evangelists of a change of posture when the prayers began ; and the general posture occupied during the sacred feast, in absence of all other proof, must be understood as determining the attitude of prayer.”<sup>2</sup> To pray standing was

<sup>1</sup> See Poole and Henry, and Kitto’s “ Illustrations.”

<sup>2</sup> *United Presbyterian Magazine*, July 1864.

the manner of the Jews (Neh. ix. 4, 5 ; Mark xi. 25 Luke xviii. 11, 13,—“whence,” says Godwyn, “by way of proverb, they say, ‘Were it not for standing, the world would not stand’”<sup>1</sup>); and in moments of more than ordinary humiliation or emotion of heart, this attitude was sometimes changed to one of kneeling or prostration (2 Chron. vi. 12, 13). The latter seems to be of all postures the most proper and becoming. But where neither standing nor kneeling can be conveniently practised, it cannot be regarded as unlawful to choose the attitude which has of late been extensively adopted in our worshipping assemblies. Without the inward feelings of reverence and humility, no outward attitude can be truly devout; and wherever a devout and reverential frame of mind exists, it will give solemnity to any outward form that is consistent with it.

<sup>1</sup> “Moses and Aaron,” B. ii. c. 2.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *PREACHING.*

THIS is a Divine ordinance which, though not peculiar to the Christian dispensation, has under it been assigned a place of special importance. It is mentioned first in the sacred historian's account of the stated observances of the Church at Jerusalem. The converts of Pentecost "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine" or teaching, that is, in attending on their instructions, "and in the fellowship," the communication of property, "and in the breaking of bread," the celebration of the Lord's Supper, "and in the prayers," or devotional services. It was the glory of the Reformation that it restored public preaching to the Church; and in the worship of the Scottish Protestant Churches, this has ever held a prominent place. "So much," says Jamieson, "are the people accustomed to regard it as of pre-eminent importance, that this habit of thought has moulded their common conversation; and, while an inhabitant of England speaks of going to chapel, or attending service, a native of Scotland comprehends all the purposes of church

attendance in the phrase of going to *hear* a particular minister.”

There are two forms of preaching, of exhibiting Divine truth, or statedly conducting the ministry of the Word, which have long been known by the names of *Lecture* and *Sermon*; and both these have all along been usually exemplified in the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland.

By some of the early acts of the General Assembly, Presbyteries were enjoined to visit parishes, and put questions to all concerned. The Presbytery were, first of all, to ask the Session about the minister; and, among other questions,<sup>1</sup> there was this, “Doth he lecture and preach in the forenoon, and preach again in the afternoon, and that, both summer and winter?” It thus appears that a minister’s pulpit labours were to consist of a lecture and two sermons, delivered at two diets of worship on every Sabbath. This is still exemplified in the services appointed to be conducted in connection with the annual meeting of the General Assemblies of the Established and Free Churches, on the two Sabbaths that occur during the time when these meetings are held; and it may be the usual practice still, in some parts of the country, to fulfil the old requirement. But, in general, when the two diets of worship continue to be observed,

<sup>1</sup> Such as these, “Doth he keep family worship? Is he a haunter of ale-houses and taverns? Is he a dancer, carder, or dicer? Saw ye him ever drink healths? Keeps he much at home in his ministerial work? Is Saturday only his book-day? or is he constantly at his calling? Doth he preach sound doctrine, so far as ye can understand?”

as in the town churches, the preaching in the forenoon, like that in the afternoon, is restricted to a single discourse,—the discourse in the one case being commonly a lecture, and in the other, a sermon. In many or most of the country churches, there is now only one meeting each Sabbath in summer as well as in winter; and whereas formerly, when this was the case, it was customary for the minister to give both a lecture and a sermon, it is now more frequently the practice to preach only one discourse. Robert Hall is reported to have said that a man of mediocre intellectual power may write two sermons in a week, but a really talented man will find himself able to compose only one. If this be a true dictum, it may seem to be a just inference that country ministers in general are men of superior ability.<sup>1</sup> However this may be, it might be supposed that the smaller amount of productiveness required from them would secure greater excellence of the product. But, in many cases, they are engaged in the evening of the Lord's day, or on week-day evenings, in preaching in school-rooms, or dwelling-houses, or barns, or, during summer, in the open air; and for these services, those who wish them to be spiritually profitable will by no means neglect careful preparation.

<sup>1</sup> A member of a rural congregation who had removed to the town, and had been for some time resident there, when his old minister, meeting him one day, said to him, "You will have grand preaching now," replied, "Ay, when the country ministers come in to the town at the Sacrament time."



## THE LECTURE.

In lecturing, "the usual practice is to select a book, say one of the gospels or epistles, and to proceed from beginning to end regularly through its successive chapters, expounding a considerable portion, longer or shorter, as its connection with the context may indicate, on every Sabbath. This is a most useful species of instruction, which is almost peculiar to Scotland, and is attended with many advantages, especially as it enables a minister, by bringing all his natural and acquired resources to bear on the illustration of a passage, to exhibit to his hearers a full and connected view of Divine truth, and affords him, at the same time, as diversified topics are brought up in the course of review before him, an opportunity of admonishing his people on many faults in their life and practice, without incurring the charge of an invidious reference."<sup>1</sup> It is eminently adapted to gain the great ends for which Divine revelation has been given, and especially to promote one chief object of the Christian ministry—the progress of believers in knowledge and faith and holiness; and it has been justly remarked that in this species of pulpit ministrations, for which Scotland has long been eminently distinguished, lies the origin, in a great measure, of the acknowledged superiority of its people in religious intelligence and discernment. About forty years ago, a newly licensed probationer of the United Secession Church, having been sent to preach in

<sup>1</sup> Jamieson, "Religions of the World," p. 128.

a vacant congregation, was asked, on the Saturday evening, by one of its leading members, if he had brought a lecture with him, and on replying that he had not, was told that he had no chance of obtaining a call. I doubt whether the lecture is so highly prized now as it was then by the people in general, and whether it forms now so regular a part of the ministrations of the pulpit; but still, I believe, the more intelligent of the people, and the more experienced of the ministers, will agree with Mr Jay, who, after his visit to Scotland, "recorded it as his settled judgment that nothing could be more profitable to the hearer and useful to the preacher."<sup>1</sup>

Of the two forms into which all the modes of lecturing or conducting exposition may be resolved, the method of Descant and that of Analysis, the latter, undoubtedly, possesses the greater advantages; but, probably, the former, being attended with less difficulty, has been the more frequently practised. I have heard of a minister, — a deservedly popular preacher, and a man greatly loved by his people and all that knew him, — who said he was accustomed to take a long passage as the subject of his lecture, that, if he were persecuted in one verse, he might flee to another; and I suspect that the neglect of due preparation in this department of pulpit-work which the sentiment thus somewhat profanely expressed seems to indicate, was far from being uncommon. It cannot, however, be supposed that lecturing would have been so acceptable and so useful as it unquestionably was, had not careful study been the rule with most right-minded minis-

<sup>1</sup> "Autobiography," p. 140.

ters; and, doubtless, the sentiments and feelings of many were such as those expressed by that most accomplished exegete, Dr John Brown, when he says, "I never enter on the exposition of a portion of inspired Scripture without a conviction that, in doing so, I am performing one of the most important and responsible duties of my office as a public Christian teacher. I feel as if the ground on which I stood were peculiarly holy."<sup>1</sup> In his excellent memoir of his father, Dr William Peddie states that, "at the beginning of his ministry, it was his custom to separate to a considerable extent between the explanatory matter and the doctrinal and practical inferences, which were afterwards gathered up and stated in formal propositions," and that he did this "in conformity with the fashion then prevailing in the Secession." This fashion, which was not peculiar to the Secession, continued to prevail in more recent times. But now the better method is more common of connecting immediately with each of the different parts of the passage expounded its own appropriate lessons or application, and perhaps closing the discourse with a general brief conclusion, which furnishes the practical improvement of the whole. Dr Peddie's biographer mentions that he abandoned his original method, and "wove in with great skill what was didactic and hortatory with the course of the explanation, without breaking the continuity of the performance, and so as to make it more lively, rich, and instructive;" and Dr Peddie's fame as a lecturer has not yet quite died away.

<sup>1</sup> "The Law of Christ respecting Civil Obedience." Note xxvi.

## TEXTS OF SERMONS.

The late Rev. Dr Robson of Glasgow, in his sermon preached on occasion of the death of his colleague, the Rev. Dr Mitchell (Professor of Biblical Literature and Criticism to the United Secession Church), speaking of the useful talent which that "model pastor," as he has been justly called, "early attained, of seizing the fragments of time, and permitting nothing to be lost, of habituating himself to pursue trains of thought, even when going from house to house, and being ever engaged in preparing materials for his public and social ministrations," adds, "To this invaluable habit is to be ascribed the fact that he never, during his whole life, lost an hour in fixing on the subject and the text on which to preach." The late Dr Andrew Somerville (Foreign Mission Secretary to the United Presbyterian Church, formerly minister at Dumbarton) has made a similar statement respecting himself in his interesting autobiography: "I never spent an hour, except once, in seeking for a text, as I had generally a number of subjects going on together in the workshop of the brain. I had the faculty of studying a topic for a time, then laying it upon the shelf in the mind, taking it down a week or a month afterwards, and working at it again for a little; and thus it came to pass that I had always more subjects on my anvil than I required. I could also utilise the fragments of time,—what Cicero calls the *subseciva tempora*,—being able to pursue trains of thought on the highway, in

company, or in any corner. I found many of my texts, and the divisions of my sermons, beside the beds of the sick." There are, I suppose, comparatively few whose experience exactly resembles that recorded in these two instances. Most ministers, probably, have sometimes felt more or less difficulty in choosing a text.<sup>1</sup> I do not suppose that a wish to save trouble in this respect had any influence in producing and continuing the custom that formerly prevailed, of preaching a series of sermons on the same text. Dr Porter, in his "Homiletical Lectures," gives a number of instances, of which the most marvellous, certainly, is that of a minister who preached "a train of eleven discourses on the interjection 'O.'" Two of the best specimens with which I am acquainted are Traill's "Thirteen Sermons on the Throne of Grace, from Heb. iv. 16," first printed in 1696, and his "Sixteen Sermons on the Lord's Prayer, in John xvii. 24," first printed in 1705. The like of this is not known now: it would be deemed intolerably tedious. But it is still not unusual for ministers to preach courses of sermons on connected topics, or on a series of texts standing together in the Scriptures. "I found it was good for myself," says Dr Somerville, "and also, I believe, for the hearers, to preach what may be called a series or course of

<sup>1</sup> There is an anecdote told of a minister's wife, who seemed to think the choice of the text a more difficult thing than the composition of the sermon. Give me a text, she said on one occasion, and I will soon write a sermon on it. A text was suggested, which, however, led her at once to ask indignantly, Do you mean me? when she was told in reply that she would not make a good sermon-writer, as she "was far too soon at the application."



sermons—that is, connected sermons. Thus I had sixteen sermons on 1 Peter i. 3-12, a number on Hebrews viii. 8-13, and xii. 22-29, and twenty-one sermons on the Work of the Holy Spirit. The advantage of this mode is that nothing is lost; the thoughts that are suggested in studying the topic of to-day, which you do not require, will find a place in the next discourse.” Another advantage may be remarked in its tendency to excite and promote preparation for hearing the Word on the part of pious and intelligent worshippers.

#### METHODS OF SERMONS.

The custom in bygone times was to have numerous divisions, or, first, to explain the text; secondly, to state the doctrines contained in it, or found one doctrine upon it; next, to lay out the doctrine proposed or selected in several branches, and then, to illustrate each by a number of particulars or observations, which were frequently divided and sub-divided, till the hearer lost himself in the labyrinth. Of this plan it has been said, “It was apt to give a metaphysical cast to the sermon, foreign to the great objects of impressing, warning, and elevating the souls of the hearers. It often furnished temptations to travel out of the subject, and even when the goal was contemplated, and by-paths were avoided, the progress to it became fatiguing and oppressive.” Mr Robinson, in the notes to his translation of Claude’s “Essay on the Composition of a Sermon,” published in 1777, says, “A hundred years ago, most sermons had



thirty, forty, or even sixty particulars. There is a sermon of Mr Lyes on 1 Cor. vi. 17, the terms of which, he says, I shall endeavour to explain. This he does in thirty particulars for fixing it on a right basis ; and then, he adds fifty-six more to explain the subject—in all, eighty-six. If Mr Lyes was so prolific, what shall we say to Mr Drake, whose sermon at the same Morning Exercise, has above a hundred and seventy parts, besides queries and solutions ; and yet the good man says he passed sundry useful points, pitching only on that which comprehended the marrow and substance.” A hundred years later, and during the greater part of last century, the sermons of the Secession ministers in general still exhibited a tedious multiplication of particulars under every head of discourse. In Ebenezer Erskine’s sermon on “The New Testament Ark,” from Heb. xi. 7, for example, there are five general heads ; and under the first, there are six particulars, under the second, six, under the third, seven, under the fourth, seven ; and in the last part, there are two uses, with eight and seven particulars respectively. The application or improvement of the whole subject was generally given in the form of a number of “uses,”—use of information, of examination or trial, of reproof, of exhortation, of consolation. A young minister, about sixty years ago, was told by an aged member of his congregation that he liked his preaching very well, “but,” he added, “I miss the ooses.” Another example may be taken from the published sermons of the Rev. Robert Shirra of Kirkcaldy. The first of these, the text of which is John i. 16,

has three divisions. In the first, there are three topics, in the illustration of the first of which four remarks are made, in the illustration of the second, three, with four subordinate particulars, and in the illustration of the third, five questions are answered. Under the second head, there are four particulars ; and the discourse concludes with six inferences, and a general exhortation. The following is an outline of a sermon preached in 1767, and contained in a manuscript volume which I possess of discourses by the Rev. James Morison of Norham, who commenced a Sabbath-school in that town about a quarter of a century before Mr Raikes' time, and who died in 1824, in the sixty-eighth year of his ministry. The text is Matt. ix. 12, "But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

From these words, we observe the following doctrines: 1. Sin is a spiritual disease ; 2. Jesus Christ is the Physician appointed by God for the cure and healing of this disease ; 3. All sin-sick souls have need of this Physician.

I. Sin is a spiritual disease.

1. Why sin is compared to sickness. It is fitly compared to sickness in regard of the effects of it. Sin doth produce all those effects on the soul which sickness doth upon the body.

(1) Sickness unfits the body for action ; (2) it causes torment and anguish ; (3) it takes away the appetite ; (4) it doth bring unconsciousness ; (5) it brings death.

2. What sort of sickness and disease sin is.

(1) It is a sickness and disease which seizes upon the most noble part of man ; (2) which man himself is the author of ; (3) which separates between God and men ; (4) which is the cause of all our sickness ; (5) which cannot be cured by any natural medicine in the world ; (6) it is a loathsome and infectious disease ; (7) it is a very spreading disease ; (8) it is a natural and hereditary disease.

II. Jesus is the Physician appointed by God for the cure and healing of the sickness and disease of sin.

1. How Christ heals this disease.

2. The excellency of Christ above all other physicians.

(1) He heals the soul ; (2) He is a Physician for this disease in all its forms and degrees ; (3) He can give no hurtful medicine ; (4) He heals speedily ; (5) He can bless His physic ; (6) He heals the poor, as well as the sick ; (7) He heals all freely ; (8) He offers Himself ; (9) He doth not depart, though He be reviled and ill-used ; (10) He is Himself the sick man's medicine ; (11) He is a chirurgeon, as well as a physician.

III. All sin-sick souls have need of this Physician. This doctrine is treated of in a similar manner.

Each of these doctrines is practically improved in a number of inferences. The following are those in the second part:—1. Hence see that Christ will kindly accept all endeavours of men for the healing of the spiritual distempers of their fellowmen. 2. That, as we ought to apply to Christ for healing, so none have ground or reason to despair of healing. 3. Christ's

suitableness to us. 4. Ground of comfort to the people of God. 5. Ground of reproof to such as rob Christ of the honour of a Physician.

This mode of discoursing has long since been abandoned; or, at least, it is now seldom exactly followed. I remember only one instance of its being reverted to; that of a sermon preached by a student in the Divinity Hall of the United Secession Church,<sup>1</sup> in which there were three general heads, and under each about a score of particulars. The illustration of each particular was very brief, sometimes consisting only of a single sentence, as, for instance, when it was remarked that the saint is an object of wicked men's malignant or envious observation, and this remark was illustrated thus: "First Samuel eighteenth and ninth, 'And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.'" Perhaps there is now a tendency to go to the opposite extreme, and to make a sermon assume very much the form of an essay or harangue. In England, even in the beginning of last century, Lord Shaftesbury tells us the old plan of subdividing into firsts and seconds had gone out of fashion, and the "elegant Court divine exhorts in miscellany, and is ashamed to bring his twos and threes before a fashionable assembly." But method should ever be considered as essential. "Order," says Vinet, "is the characteristic of a true discourse; it is only a discourse in virtue of it: without it, we know not what name to

<sup>1</sup> The same who was the subject of the extraordinary act of abduction related by Mr Landreth in his "History of the United Presbyterian Hall," p. 219.

give it." And, in general, the hearers must find it advantageous for them that the method should not be concealed, but be plainly disclosed. "Concealed method," says Mr Jay, "is much the same as none. And why should it ever be concealed? The lower orders peculiarly need it; it relieves and quickens their attention; it aids their apprehension and understanding. It also enables them the better to retain and carry away what they hear."<sup>1</sup> It has been alleged, however, that, "in easing the memory, we connive at the indolence of the mind;" and asked, "Would it not be much better to put the division at the end of the discourse, by way of recapitulation?"<sup>2</sup>

#### QUOTATION OF SCRIPTURE.

In his Autobiography Mr Jay says, "Some have complained of my sermons being filled with too much Scripture. If this be an error, it is surely on the right side; and as Dr Geddes (Gillies?) says, 'I love to give God's children plenty of their own bread.' I am sure of this, that I never used quotations from the Scripture merely to fill up or lengthen out a discourse; and I trust I have never introduced any fancifully, or regardlessly of the mind of the Spirit. Yet I own there is occasionally some excess; and it has probably resulted from my familiarity with the language of the Bible, having, before many books came in my way, read it much, and committed much to memory." A hundred years ago the

<sup>1</sup> "Autobiography," p. 141. "Recte habita in causa partitio illustrem et perspicuam totam efficit orationem. Ex qua conficitur, ut certas animo res teneat auditor."—*Cicero*.

<sup>2</sup> Vinet's "Homiletics," part ii. chap. 3.



sermons of evangelical Scottish ministers generally were more replete with Scripture than Mr Jay's are ; and it was customary with some of them, when they quoted a passage of Scripture, to mention chapter and verse. Mr Shirra's printed sermons furnish a specimen ; and, looking into a manuscript volume of sermons which I have of an ancestor of mine, I find in many pages a text appended to every second or third sentence. This worthy minister had long observed the practice mentioned above, but, I have been told, was led to abandon it by the circumstance that, on one occasion when he was preaching from home, a woman in the audience, who was somewhat weak in mind, but had acquired an extraordinary knowledge of the contents of the Bible, interrupted him by an emphatic assertion of the inaccuracy of one of his references, telling him that the chapter from which his quotation was made had not the number of verses which he had ascribed to it. Perhaps in the present day there may be remarked a tendency to err by defect rather than by excess of quotation from Scripture ; and the former error is worse than the latter. Of the greatest English preacher of this century, Foster says, "His submission to the authority of the Scriptures became absolute and perpetual. And in this spirit he maintained through life so assiduous a practice of studying the Bible, that he had acquired a remarkable facility for citing from every part of it, in the course of his preaching, the passages most pertinent for evidence or enforcement of whatever he was advancing."<sup>1</sup> Blair justly remarks, "Direct quotations,

<sup>1</sup> Gregory's "Memoir of Hall," p. 318.



brought from Scripture in order to support what the preacher indicates, both give authority to his doctrine, and render his discourse more solemn and venerable. Allusions to remarkable passages or expressions of Scripture, when introduced with propriety, have generally a pleasing effect. They afford the preacher a fund of metaphorical expression which no other composition enjoys, and by means of which he can vary and enliven his style."<sup>1</sup> They give to discourses a peculiar beauty and richness.

These ends, however, it may be remarked, can be served only when quotations from Scripture are correct and appropriate. "I have often," says a writer in the *United Secession Magazine*, "been surprised and grieved by the misquotations of Scripture, which are frequently heard both in the discourses and the prayers of ministers of the Gospel. These must be a source of pain to every person who entertains due reverence for the language of inspiration. I do not think it either unlawful or improper, when quoting an obscure passage from the Word of God, to add a brief explanation of it, or to alter our translation when it is in any respect faulty. I refer to variations and additions, which, though intended by their authors to pass for improvements, will be found, on a little consideration, to possess a very different character." The writer then proceeds to give some instances of misquotation, as a specimen of those which most frequently occur. All the additions made to the words of Scripture destroy the point and forcibleness of its statements; and many of them look as if they

<sup>1</sup> "Lecture on Rhetoric," xxix.

were used merely for the purpose of lengthening out the sermon or the prayer in which they occur, *e.g.*, "None can stay His hand *from working*, or say unto Him *with a prevailing voice*, What doest Thou?" "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity *without abhorrence*." Not unfrequently do we hear additions made to the expressions of Scripture, which convey no new idea whatever, but produce only a clumsy tautology, *e.g.*, Enable us to maintain "a *walk and conversation becoming the Gospel*;" "Lift Thou up the light of Thy *reconciled* countenance upon us." Many of the alterations frequently introduced, not only enervate the language of Scripture, but positively turn it into nonsense, *e.g.*, "How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity, *as the ox drinketh up water*." The same effect is sometimes produced by bringing together into one sentence a number of expressions to be found in Scripture, but in separate connections, *e.g.*, "We will lay our hands on our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, and cry out, Unclean, unclean." Another class of alterations are objectionable, chiefly because they limit or narrow the meaning of the declarations of Scripture, *e.g.*, "In Him we live, and move, and *from Him* we have our being;" "God *out of Christ* is a consuming fire," or, "God is a consuming fire *to the workers of iniquity*." There are additions which give to declarations of Scripture a meaning at variance with truth, *e.g.*, "It is appointed unto *all* men once to die." Lastly, there are certain phrases which have obtained currency, and are frequently quoted as

scriptural, though it would be fruitless labour to search for them in the writings of prophets or apostles, such as, "Deny us not Thy grace" (Ps. cxxxii. 10, metrical version); "We roll iniquity as a sweet morsel under our tongue;" "Wise above that which is written."<sup>1</sup> Many other instances might be given, such as, "There am I in the midst of you, *to bless you, and to do you good;*" "With Him is plenteous redemption, *that He may be sought unto;*" "God is in Heaven, and we upon earth; therefore ought our words to be few, *and well ordered;*" "A merciful man is merciful to his beast" (Prov. xii. 10); "As the tree falls, so shall it lie;" "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb" (a saying of Sterne—compare Isa. xxvii. 8); "All iniquity shall, as ashamed, hide its head" (Ps. cvii. 42). An Edinburgh minister once wrote a sermon on the words, "In the midst of life we are in death;" and on the Sabbath morning was amazed when he could not, even with the aid of his Concordance, find them anywhere in Scripture. They occur in the Church of England Burial Service.

Such misquotations are by no means peculiar to the past; probably, they are quite as frequent now as ever they were, and the saying is still worthy of attention, which Mr Brown of Haddington was accustomed to address to those who used so unwarrantable freedom with Scripture: He never could see that, with all their alterations, they made it any better.<sup>2</sup> A minister, of course, may, with

<sup>1</sup> *United Secession Magazine*, Jan. 1838. Diodati's rendering of 1 Cor. iv. 6 is, "di non esser savi sopra ciò ch' è scritto."

<sup>2</sup> *United Secession Magazine*, Nov. 1838.

perfect propriety, occasionally alter in quotation the words of our English version, which, though one of the best translations in existence, is but human, and therefore imperfect, sometimes, for instance, suggesting an incorrect view of the meaning of a passage (1 Cor. v. 14), sometimes conveying no intelligible idea to the mind (1 Cor. iv. 4), at other times being ambiguous, and apt to lead to misconception (John xvi. 23); while there are mistakes in it arising from imperfect acquaintance with the manners and customs, the natural history, and the literature of eastern countries, and a few improper renderings, attributable to dogmatic prejudices, not to mention obsolete terms not generally understood, or not used in the same acceptation now as when the translation was made. But while for these reasons it may be proper occasionally to alter the translation in quoting Scripture, this should be done very sparingly. The pedantry, it has justly been remarked, which seeks to get credit for learning by perpetual attempts to mend it, must do, not good, but much harm; and the practice is very unnecessary, for the instances of incorrect or defective rendering are few and far between.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This remark was made by a very competent judge some years ago; and, after a careful examination of the new version, in so far as it is a revision of the old, I am not disposed to differ from him in the opinion thus expressed. Misapplication is worse than misquotation; and how often do we hear passages misapplied through inattention, or want of examination, on the part of those who cite them! See two articles by the late Dr Eadie in the *United Secession Magazine* for March and April, 1840.

## CHAPTER VII.

### *PREACHING—continued.*

#### LENGTH OF DISCOURSES.

WHEN Paul preached at Troas, in the evening of the first day of the week, in connection with the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, he "continued his speech till midnight, ready to depart on the morrow." "We know some," says Mr Henry, "who would have reproached him for this, as a long-winded preacher that tired his hearers; but they were willing to hear." As we are not told at what hour the apostle began his sermon, we do not know exactly how long he preached. It is only indicated that the sermon was one of considerable length; but there can be no doubt that, being preached on a special occasion, it was longer than the apostle's discourses usually were. An hour, measured by the glass, seems to have been the legitimate length of a discourse in the great preaching days of the Reformation. "It is commonly supposed," says M'Crie, "that the public discourses of the Presbyterians at this time," in the days of Melville, "were protracted to a tedious



length. The facts which have come to my knowledge lead to an opposite conclusion, and I have no doubt that the practice referred to was introduced at a later period." "Burnet says that Bishop Forbes of Edinburgh had a strange faculty of preaching five or six hours at a time. But the following extract will show that Forbes's tediousness, even when not carried to this extreme, gave offence to his brethren at an early period. 'Nov. 1, 1605. The said daye, Mr William Forbes regent exercisit, quha was commended, but censurit because he techit two hours.' Record of the Presbytery of Aberdeen."<sup>1</sup> Of Bishop Burnet, Macaulay says, "He was often interrupted by the deep hum of his audience; and when, after preaching out the hour-glass, which in those days was part of the furniture of the pulpit, he held it up in his hands, the congregation clamorously encouraged him to go on till the sand ran off once more."<sup>2</sup> This reminds me of Chrysostom and his auditors. They, we are told, "clapped their hands, and waved their handkerchiefs in applause of the orator's appeals;" and "by this means, after the manner of a modern *encore*, the admirers of the bishop sought to prolong the entertainment."<sup>3</sup> Bishop Alcock preached "a good and

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Melville," chap. xii. St Patrick, it is storied, went through the four gospels in one discourse, which lasted three days and three nights; and yet his hearers were so delighted that they thought that but one day had passed, and only one of them took a nap.

<sup>2</sup> "Hist. of England," vol. ii. p. 433.

<sup>3</sup> Stoughton's "Ages of Christendom before the Reformation." Anything of this kind I have witnessed only on one occasion, namely, at the celebration in Edinburgh of the Tricentenary of the



pleasant sermon" at St Mary's, Cambridge, which lasted from one o'clock till half-past three. Of Dr Isaac Barrow's sermons we are told that seldom less than an hour and a half was occupied in the delivery. It is related that, having occasion to preach a charity sermon before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London, he spoke for three hours and a half; and that, when asked, on coming down from the pulpit, whether he was not tired, he replied, "Yes, indeed, I began to be weary with standing so long."<sup>1</sup> John Howe, Dr Calamy tells us, on public fast-days, which occurred "pretty frequently," used to occupy seven hours, with but one brief interval of fifteen minutes, in praying, expounding, and preaching.

There is nothing like these performances to be witnessed in the present day. I remember, however, hearing the late Dr John Ritchie of Edinburgh, on the evening of a Communion Sabbath in a country church, preach a sermon which extended to an hour and fifty

Scottish Reformation, August 15, 1560, when Dr Guthrie preached, and "over and over again throughout the sermon, as the preacher closed some high-wrought passage, the feelings of his auditors found vent in an irrepressible murmur of applause, which, despite of all efforts to hush down the demonstration, broke out once or twice into a distinct cheer."—*Newspaper Report*.

<sup>1</sup> Chambers' "Cycl. of English Lit.," vol. i. p. 429. Dean Ramsay tells of a Scottish minister, who was far from being a popular preacher, and yet could not reduce his discourses below the hour and a half, that, on being asked, as a gentle hint of their possibly needless length, if he did not feel tired after preaching, he replied, "Na, na, I'm no tired;" adding, however, with much naïvete, "But hoo tired the fowk whiles are!"—"Reminiscences," p. 213.

minutes, and administer a severe rebuke to a large number of his hearers, who had been present from the commencement of the services in the forenoon, and, as soon as his discourse was ended, were hastening out of the church to go to their distant homes. On a previous occasion, in the same place, he preached for an hour and a half; and his discourses in his own pulpit frequently approached this length. I remember, too, a late excellent minister in East Lothian, after he had preached an action-sermon about an hour and twenty minutes long, expressing his deep regret at having forgotten some topics of great importance, on which he had intended to dwell at considerable length. Some of the early Secession ministers, however, were accustomed to preach short sermons. In Adam Gib's note-book of lectures and sermons for forty-eight Sabbaths in 1752-3, the number of discourses preached by him is stated to have been 144, and the time occupied in delivery 112 hours and 26 minutes—the average being thus 46 minutes and 50 seconds. This was somewhat less than the usual length of sermons at the time when I commenced my ministry (about forty years ago); and even then, and for a number of years subsequently, it was often considerably exceeded. But now there are probably few ministers who preach sermons so long that they might give occasion to such a remark as was made by an English Judge several years ago, respecting the Assize Sermon which the Chaplain to a High Sheriff had preached. "How, my lord," the Sheriff asked, "did you like the Chaplain's sermon?" The Judge replied, "Why, to

tell you the truth, I heard in that sermon what I never heard before, and what I hope I shall never hear again." He was afterwards asked what it was that he had heard. With a smile he replied, "I heard the clock strike twice."<sup>1</sup>

"There is nothing," says Mr Jay, "against which a preacher should be more guarded than length;" and, having mentioned that Luther, in his enumeration of nine qualities of a good preacher, gives as the sixth, "That he should know when to make an end," and that Boyle has an essay on "Patience under long Preaching," Mr Jay states that, in the earlier period of his ministry, he never offended in this way, preaching only three-quarters of an hour at most.<sup>2</sup> But now, a sermon occupying this space of time would not be thought to possess the excellence of brevity.

Mr Landreth, in his "Life of Dr Thomson of Coldstream," having mentioned that this excellent minister, early in his pastorate, and for a long succession of years, preached a third sermon every Sabbath evening in his own pulpit, says, "Robert Hall describes third sermons as 'a device of Satan for killing ministers,' though, perhaps, the devil has more to do in tempting ministers to be indolent than in tempting them to be over-zealous;" and, having noticed, as one of the mischiefs which the practice has been said to cause to hearers, that the third sermon is more than they can profit by,—that "itself is disregarded, or it expels from memory and reflection one of the other two, or perhaps it mars the good effect of all

<sup>1</sup> *The Churchman*, Oct. 1881.

<sup>2</sup> "Autobiography," p. 146.

the three," Mr Landreth remarks that "this allegation assumes that the capacity of hearers is childishly small." This remark is still more applicable to such an allegation when made, as it sometimes is, with reference to a second sermon, even though it should immediately follow the first. "Such compassion," Mr Landreth adds, "is now felt for that slender capacity in hearers, that the cry is to make sermons far shorter, as well as fewer." This compassion for the hearers is combined, perhaps, with some degree of merciful consideration for the preachers themselves. To a young minister it was, undoubtedly, very hard work to have to prepare two discourses every week, each fifty-five minutes or an hour in length; and this severe labour was often considerably augmented by the circumstance of young men usually speaking with much greater rapidity than older and more experienced preachers do. I remember, when a student in the Secession Divinity Hall had delivered a discourse with an extraordinary degree of velocity, though with no indistinctness of utterance, the professor, Dr Brown, remarked that he was not disposed to find fault with him for his speed, as he was quite sure that, were he spared to become a minister, having regularly two discourses to prepare for the Sabbath, he would soon learn to speak slowly enough, by finding it necessary to practise economy in respect of the quantity of matter. Several years, however, passed after his ordination ere he began in that respect to profit by experience; and an action-sermon of his might contain above eight thousand words.

Sermons now-a-days must be only twenty minutes long, or, at any rate, not extend beyond half-an-hour; and in many cases they will not be greatly found fault with, even by the avowed and known critics, if, whatever other excellence may be wanting, they possess the indispensable and superlative merit of brevity. Some would have the preaching abbreviated, in order that the devotional services may be enlarged. But the ministry of the Word is, undoubtedly, to be regarded as the principal and most important part of the services of the sanctuary; and the Christian people ought not to desire the time allotted to it to be unduly shortened for the purpose of affording larger space for the devotional exercises, which are not peculiar to the public assembly, and which are there connected with the ordinance of preaching as subservient to the accomplishment of its appropriate ends in the conversion of sinners, and “the fitting of saints for work of service, in order to the edifying of the body of Christ.” “There must be,” says the Helvetian Confession, “a mean and measure, as in every other thing, so also in public prayers, that they be not over long and tedious: let therefore the most time be given to the teaching of the Gospel in such holy assemblies; and let there be diligent heed taken, that the people in these assemblies be not wearied with over long prayers, so as when the preaching of the Gospel should be heard, they through wearisomeness either desire to go forth themselves, or to have the assembly wholly dismissed. For unto such the sermons seem to be over long, which otherwise are brief enough. Yea, and the preachers ought to keep a



mean. Likewise, the singing in sacred assemblies ought to be moderated, when it is in use.”<sup>1</sup>

#### PREACHING OF OLD SERMONS.

In the Directory for Presbyterial Visitation, one of the questions respecting the minister is, “Spends he too much time in his sermon in repetition of what he said before?” that is, in recapitulating a previous sermon on the same text. It might have been expected that this would be followed by another question of a similar kind: “Doth he preach old sermons?” Had this question been put, the answer, in many instances, undoubtedly must have been, “Yes; he often does so.” Many of the “moderate” ministers had each but one set of sermons which they repeated regularly as the period over which they extended went round; and not unfrequently the time of revolution was very brief. Dean Ramsay gives an anecdote of a minister who, as he and the beadle were one day proceeding from church, observed the beadle laughing as if he had triumphed over some of the parishioners with whom he had been in conversation. On asking the cause of this, he received for answer, “They were saying ye had preached an auld sermon to-day; but I taikled them, for I tauld them it was no an auld sermon, for the minister had preached it no sax months syne.” Dean Ramsay also gives the following statement from Dr Cook of Haddington: “An old elder of mine, whose recollection

<sup>1</sup> “The Latter Confession of Helvetia,” of 1566, chap. 23, in “An Harmony of the Confessions of the Faith of the Reformed Churches.” English Translation, 1643.



might reach back from sixty to seventy years, said to me one day, ‘Now-a-days, people make a work if a minister preach the same sermon over again in the course of two or three years. When I was a boy, we would have wondered if old Mr W—— had preached anything else than what we heard the Sunday before.’” In an account which Dr John Jamieson has left of the state of matters in the parish of Kingarth, in the island of Bute, when he visited it as a probationer, that is, a little more than a hundred years ago, he says of the parish minister, who frequently came to see him, and showed him much kindness, “He often found me writing, and when I told him I was studying a sermon or a lecture, he laughed at my diligence, asking me if I had no old discourses, and assuring me they would do perfectly well in Bute. ‘I have been many years in this parish,’ said he,—I forget how many he specified,—‘and I never had more than four sermons. I go through them every month. All that I do is to change the texts; and I do not believe that any of my hearers, except blind David, observe that they are still the same.’”<sup>1</sup> Much more recently, a congregation to whom the minister of a neighbouring parish was always employed to preach on the evening of their annual Communion Sabbath, was, I have been told, uniformly treated by him to the same sermon. An old minister, who had a set that he went through once in a year, when his congregation ventured to hint that they

<sup>1</sup> M‘Kelvie’s “Annals,” &c., p. 573. In “Blind Pits,” one of the characters is a Mr Pettigrew, a probationer, who had “lived fifteen years on ten sermons, and saved money.”

would like some variety, said, "My friends, my sermons are intended to do you good, not to entertain you; when I see that you practise what I have been preaching for so many years, then I will treat you to something fresh."<sup>1</sup> This, however, was but a poor apology for so lazy a practice; nor will any conscientious minister or intelligent member of the church regard it as receiving any countenance from the words of Paul in one of his epistles, "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe."

Such a practice, I presume, was unknown among the evangelical ministers of the Church of Scotland, and among the ministers of the Dissenting Churches. By some of the latter, the avoidance of it was carried to an extreme. Of Dr Young, minister of the Anti-Burgher Congregation at Hawick, towards the end of the last and at the beginning of the present century, the well known author of "Essays on Government" ("a man," says Sir Walter Scott's biographer, "of great worth and talents," a memoir of whom would have been given to the world by Scott, had not the illness of the latter, which resulted in his death, prevented him from executing his design<sup>2</sup>), of this distinguished Secession minister I have been told, that he never preached a sermon over again, but, even in giving a series of discourses on a particular text or subject, continued it when preaching from home, and, on returning to his own pulpit, proceeded from the point so reached. I do not know, however, whether this strict abstinence from repetition was common among

<sup>1</sup> *Leisure Hour*, May 1877.

<sup>2</sup> M'Kelvie's "Annals," p. 519.

Secession ministers. In a journal which I possess of one who died about forty years ago, there is a "Review of Official Employment" in the year 1814, in which he notes, "Seem to have composed sixty-five sermons, of which fourteen were not delivered at home." But in the same record, giving an account of eleven several occasions in which he assisted at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, he states, that of twenty-four sermons preached, five were sermons repeated. It is probable that the main reason why the Secession ministers did not commonly make use of old sermons when assisting brethren on sacramental occasions, is to be found in the circumstances that many of their own people attended these preachings, even when they had to travel very considerable distances. Some, however, may have been influenced by a conviction that, if they should give discourses already preached, they would be violating the principle indicated by King David when he said to Araunah the Jebusite, "Neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This principle seems to have been much more seriously violated by what may be called a system of exchange. I remember an eminent minister of the church to which I belong telling me that the minister of the Established Church in the place where he lived said to him at the time of the union of the two large sections of the Secession, that he supposed one advantage of the union to him would be, that he and the minister of the neighbouring Secession congregation might exchange manuscripts, so as to be each under the necessity of preparing a sermon for the pulpit only once in the fortnight. There was, doubtless, an intended degree of facetiousness in the remark; but it was nevertheless understood by the minister to whom it was made as indicating a practice that existed among the "moderates" in the Established Church. I have heard

## THE READING OF SERMONS.

“Early in the middle of last century,” says Dr Jamieson, speaking with reference to the Church of Scotland, “an attempt was made to depart from the ancient practice of *delivering* sermons, and, in imitation of the preachers in the English Church, to read them from beginning to end. This innovation was introduced by a few of the *moderate* clergy;” and, “though for a long time the practice was confined to the boldest and most

the following anecdote of two ministers of the same name who resided in the same town, the one belonging to the Established, and the other to a Dissenting Church. A parcel intended for the latter having been brought to the house of the former, it was sent to its proper destination with a note addressed to the Dissenting minister in some such terms as these: “Sir,—If you had not assumed an office to which you have no right, this mistake would not have occurred.” Soon afterwards a parcel was handed in at the Dissenting minister’s house, which, on being opened, was found to contain a number of sermons in manuscript. The parcel was tied up again, and sent to the minister for whom it was seen to be intended, with this note accompanying it: “Sir,—If you did not occupy a position for which you are not qualified, this mistake would not have occurred.” Here, however, as the writer of this note supposed, the transaction was not one of exchange of similar commodities, but of pecuniary purchase, and was thus very much akin to a certain gross violation of the principle,—involving, as some think, a very heinous transgression of the eighth commandment,—which may be indicated by an anecdote of a Secession minister, author of a “History of the Waldenses,” a work of great learning and research. This minister was returning home from Edinburgh after the meeting of the supreme court of another church than that to which he belonged, and was seated on the outside of the stage-coach among a number of clergymen, who talked to each other quite freely about the books of sermons they were accustomed to make use of in their pulpit ministrations. Being supposed to be a minister of their own communion, he was asked whose sermons he was in the habit of preach-

careless of that class," yet at length it was adopted to a large extent by its adherents, and "finally became for nearly half a century a mark or criterion of the party in the Church to which a preacher belonged. Many of the principal men among the moderate party, however, continued to oppose it as a dangerous innovation, and Blair, to the end of his life, directed against it the weight of his unmitigated censure, as destructive of all pulpit eloquence. In process of time, numbers of the Evangelical clergy had recourse to it, on the ground of ageing, and replied, "Blair's." "Blair's!" they exclaimed, "They are too well known, are they not? Do your people never find fault with you?" "On the contrary," he replied, "they would be very much displeased were I to preach those of any one else." They seemed to think that he had special reason to felicitate himself on account of the kind of people whose minister he was; and never suspected their blunder till, on descending from the coach, and taking his leave, he begged to inform them that he was the Rev. Adam Blair, Secession minister, Ferry-Port-on-Craig. It would, however, be unfair to let it be supposed that unlawful appropriation or unacknowledged indebtedness of this kind was to be found only among a certain party in one communion. Posthumous volumes of sermons preached by ministers of other denominations might be referred to, which prove that by some of them, perhaps only a very few, it was practised in a greater or less degree, sometimes even to the extent of a whole sermon; and a minister of one of these churches, who died about forty years ago, after a lengthened pastorate of eminent ability and usefulness, is said to have complimented another doctor of divinity who lived and laboured to the north of the Forth, on the singular strictness with which he observed the Sabbath in "not speaking his own words." A late professor of divinity, criticising the discourse of a student who had borrowed largely from Blair's celebrated sermon on the text, "The hour is come," gently, yet severely, reprov'd him by saying, with reference to one sentiment which he had altered, "I am sure you did not find that in Blair." There are some very fit remarks on this subject in Dr Wardlaw's "Systematic Theology," vol. iii. chap. xxviii.



and bodily or mental infirmities. More recently, the examples of Sir Henry Moncreiff and Dr Andrew Thomson in Edinburgh, and of Dr Chalmers in Glasgow, had a most powerful effect in changing the popular views on this point ; and now the practice of reading their sermons is quite general amongst the ministers of all parties in the large towns and cities.”<sup>1</sup> Dr Chalmers, in particular, bore down all opposition to his use of “the paper” by his manner of reading. One day, an anecdote having been told in his hearing of a country woman, who, in spite of her great general abhorrence of the practice, was much attached to the preaching of “a paper minister,” and who, on this strange inconsistency being remarked upon, replied in her own defence, “Ay, very true ; but then he has a *pith* with his paper,” Dr Chalmers said, “That reminds me of an old anecdote of myself. A friend of mine expressing his surprise to a country woman in Fife, that she, who so hated reading, should yet be so fond of Mr Chalmers, she replied, with a serious shake of her head, “Nae doubt ; but it’s *fell readin’* thon.”<sup>2</sup>

Till about fifty years ago, this practice was unknown in the pulpits of the Secession Church. In the Testimony enacted by the General Associate Synod in 1804, and reprinted in 1817, one of the two evils condemned in regard to preaching, is “the practice of those ministers who, instead of preaching, read discourses to the people in public. This practice,” it is declared, “besides its

<sup>1</sup> “Religions of the World.”

<sup>2</sup> Hanna’s “Memoirs,” vol. ii. p. 80.



being unscriptural, either displays a consciousness of the want of ministerial gifts, or betrays great distrust of that gracious Master who endows all whom He calls with gifts suited to their work ; or it proceeds from inexcusable indolence. It also tends to increase this indolence, to make them unapt to teach, and to mar the edification of their hearers." Ten years later, a similar declaration, with the reasons of disapproval of the practice more fully stated, was included in the draft of a Testimony prepared by a Committee of the United Secession Synod ; but the Synod did not sanction it, and it formed no part of the published document. In the Relief Church, there were ministers who occasionally or habitually used their manuscripts in the pulpit. After the union of these two denominations, which took place in 1847, the Synod "declared that the reading of discourses in the ministrations of the pulpit is contrary to the practice of this Church, and not for edification," and "enjoined the Presbyteries to take care that the brethren do not deviate from the ordinary practice of the Church in this matter, except in cases where, for reasons shown, leave is asked and obtained from the Presbytery." At the same time, it was declared that this decision "shall not be understood as prohibiting from using their manuscripts in the pulpit such ministers as have been accustomed in time past to employ this mode of address." The prohibition was thus, in a great measure, nullified ; and so the practice, having found entrance, and, not being absolutely forbidden, gradually spread ; and a few years afterwards a moderator of Synod, in the sermon which he preached at the open-

ing of the Court, felt himself called upon to utter an emphatic testimony against it.<sup>1</sup>

Dr Jamieson, writing about twelve years ago, says, "In the country, the prejudice continues as wide-spread and inveterate as ever. Ministers in the rural parishes, especially in the remoter parts of the land, are in the habit for the most part of delivering their sermons *memoriter*, and voluntarily impose on themselves the task of mandating what they have previously written, as an indispensable means of rendering their instructions acceptable and useful." Probably, this statement in the first of these sentences correctly describes the still existing sentiment of the country people on this subject; but I suspect that the practice of reading has become almost as common in rural as in urban churches. It is no longer confined to pulpits whose occupants are somewhat advanced in years, or who have made the attempt to deliver their discourses from memory, and have found this impracticable, or so difficult as to necessitate their having recourse to the use of the manuscript. Dr Wardlaw, says his biographer, "made the reading of sermons attractive by raising it to the dignity almost of one of the fine arts." But "when young preachers pleaded his example for reading their sermons, he was wont to remind them that, if they followed his example, they must follow it *as a whole*, and after trying a dozen years the other way, then consider whether a change would be desirable."<sup>2</sup> Of the late Dr Heugh, his biographer says, "He entertained strong convictions as

<sup>1</sup> "The Gospel," by the Rev. George Johnston, pp. 13-16.

<sup>2</sup> "Memoir," by Dr W. L. Alexander, p. 171.

to the personal liberty of ministers in this particular, in subordination to their own conscientious regard to usefulness, and admitted the great advantage of reading in particular cases.”<sup>1</sup> But to the close of his ministry, Dr. Heugh practically indicated his conviction that in general free delivery is the preferable mode of address. The late Principal Cunningham, when a minister in Greenock, was remarkably popular, but did not succeed as a preacher in Edinburgh; and his failure is thus accounted for by his biographer: “Sagacious Hugh Miller said, as we left the College Church one day after hearing its minister, ‘Oh, that Cunningham would preach a speech!’ If his sermons had been like his speeches, the church would have been crammed to the door. There is a generation that is far too wise to believe in so simple a cause for so great an effect; but every man who really knows the Scottish people is perfectly aware that they have in their hearts an intense dislike to sermons read from the manuscript. ‘And the people,’ as Sir David Brewster once said, ‘have the philosophy of the matter on their side.’ Let it be granted that a read discourse can be better ordered and better digested, yet as to the power of rousing and sustaining attention, between the two modes there is simply no comparison. In Greenock, Cunningham did not read his sermons, or, at most, read them very seldom; and in Greenock he was a popular minister with a crowded church. The sacrifice of pulpit power which he incurred through reading was immense.”<sup>2</sup> A recent writer has

<sup>1</sup> “Life,” by Dr H. M’Gill, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> “Life,” by Mackenzie, pp. 75, 76.

justly and wisely remarked that "lectures, being chiefly intended to *instruct*, might be read more properly and with far less injury than sermons that aim to *impress*. A plain exposition, designed to communicate sound and clear views, though not refusing at the same time to be impressive, would be far more suitable for reading than a sermon which sought in the first place deeply to stir his hearers, though, of course, it also attempted to enlighten them." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Dr Thomson of Coldstream," p. 184. I have heard of an old lady, a great enemy to read sermons, who, one day in church, whispered to another sitting beside her, that she suspected the preacher was reading his discourse, and being told that that could not be the case, for he was blind, said, "I wish they were all blind!" But I knew a preacher who, though blind, might be said to read his sermons. I remember getting a letter from him which consisted of a piece of twine having a series of knots and loops in it, a species of language devised, I suppose, by himself; and a relative of his told me that he composed his discourses in this way, and, having made a clew of the twine, took the clew with him to the pulpit, and with his hand wound it off as he spoke. In many cases when the manuscript is not openly used, preaching is, after all, just (though in a different sense from that which the child intended) what one of Wordsworth's little grandsons said the poet's talking was. This "sometimes resembled a moral declamation;" and on one occasion, the boy, looking up in amazement, exclaimed, "Grandpapa is reading without a book." In the mental reading I refer to, mistakes sometimes occur, precisely such as may be made by one reading by the eye when the writing is not quite legible.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*PREACHING—continued.*

### CANTILLATION.

SPEAKING of anthems and chanting, Dr John Duncan said, "Some Highland ministers chant their sermons; and the old Seceders used to sing them. Old Aitken of Kirriemuir sang like a very mavis. He had two tunes,—his quotation tune, which he used as often as he could, and his ordinary one for his own words."<sup>1</sup> Dr Brown says in a note, "The thing here meant is the same in both cases, as all know who have heard both. When the soul swells with religious emotion, a species of *intoning* or *chanting* instinctively takes (or tends to take) the place of prosaic utterance in those who have any music in them, getting into the *minor* key in mournful utterances, and into the *major* in those which are joyous; insomuch that were one's eyes shut during certain passages in the prayers of our Highland ministers, especially at Communion seasons, he might suppose himself transported to Rome, and listening to some of the

<sup>1</sup> "Life," by Dr David Brown.



minor chants of the 'Holy Week.' No doubt, both have their origin in the same principle,—the tendency to accommodate the tones of the voice to the character of the utterance. But when this gets into stereotyped forms, and becomes mechanical, the charm departs." I remember hearing a sermon chanted or sung only in one instance, which occurred about fifty years ago, the preacher being the venerable John Brown of Whitburn, who, I believe, always practised cantillation, and greatly excelled in it.<sup>1</sup> "Great Welsh preaching," says Mr Paxton Hood, in his biography of Christmas Evans, "is very often a kind of wild, irregular chant, a jubilant refrain, recurring again and again." "The great Welsh preacher was a kind of sacred bard," who "went with his sermon, which was a kind of high song, to chant it over the heads of the multitude."

#### PREACHING TO THE YOUNG.

The religious training of the young is primarily the duty and business of their parents. Deut. vi. 6, 7; Ps. lxxviii. 5, 6. These Divine commands are no less obligatory on Christians than they were on the fathers of Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ, by His apostle, expressly enjoins parents to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of

<sup>1</sup> Of the Rev. Robert Cunningham, Secession minister at Eastbarns, near Dunbar, commonly called "Laird Cunningham," he being proprietor of Balgonie and two other estates, it is told that, on a sacramental occasion, when on his way to preach at the tent, he heard one individual complainingly say to another, "There goes the Laird, and he'll sing awa for ever," and, turning about, he replied, "I hope sae, my woman."



the Lord." No consideration can exempt parents from the obligation to instruct their families in the doctrines and laws of Christ. But the Church also has a duty to perform in this matter. It is the business of the Church, by her rulers, to stimulate, guide, and assist parents in the religious education of their children. The pastors and teachers of the Church ought to show all good fidelity in discharging the duty enjoined upon them, of "feeding the lambs."<sup>1</sup> This duty they attend to by forming and superintending Sabbath-schools for the children,<sup>2</sup> and conducting classes for the instruction of the young men and women connected with their congregations ; but they should also take heed that the children and youth be not neglected in their pulpit ministrations. In former times, when the practice of examination or catechising was regularly observed, the young were not overlooked in this exercise ; and latterly, indeed, it came to be almost restricted to the children and servants of a house, assembled in the presence of their parents or master. But it was seldom that children were distinctly addressed from the pulpit. Now, it is otherwise. It is the practice of some ministers to "drop ears," as one has expressed it, "for the children to gather, in the course

<sup>1</sup> "A good pastor carefully catechiseth his people in the elements of religion, except he hath (a rare thing !) a flock without lambs, and all of old sheep."—Thomas Fuller. One of the Canons of the Church of England enjoins this duty on all parsons, vicars, and curates. In the Icelandic Church, catechising the young "forms in winter a conspicuous and important part of public duty."—Henderson's "Iceland," p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> Note, p. 108.

of every Sabbath service ;” and besides this, many are accustomed to preach a sermon to children more or less frequently. In not a few churches, a short discourse to the young forms a regular part of the forenoon or afternoon service, preceding the stated lecture or sermon. This new practice is one that has proved highly acceptable, not only to parents, but to the people in general ; and among the members of most or all congregations, there are doubtless individuals to be found, to whom especially it is fitted to be no less useful than to those for whom it is directly intended,—persons who are “such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” At the same time, it may be remarked that it is a shame to any of the members of the Church to continue always in the state of babyhood, and to be perpetually crying for milk.

#### STUDENTS' PREACHING.

In the Presbyterian Churches government is exercised by “elders” or “presbyters,” an order of office-bearers to whom, in the apostolic epistles, the names “bishops” or “overseers,” and “pastors” or “shepherds,” are also applied. They are of two classes, the one of which comprises those whose office is limited to government, and the other, those who, besides ruling, teach, or “labour in the word and doctrine ;” there being of the latter at least one in each congregation. The duty of conducting public worship is committed to the teaching elder, who is universally called “the minister.” But students of theology, who have passed satisfactorily through the pre-

scribed course of preparatory study, are "licensed" by the Presbytery, or authorised to preach the Word, and exercise their gifts as "probationers" for the holy ministry. In the Secession Church, till about fifty years ago, students were strictly prohibited from preaching previously to license. The only opportunities allowed them of appearing before a congregation were those that occurred when ministers assisting at a communion were appointed a committee to receive discourses from them in public, at the close of the usual services on the Monday. In the last two years of my theological course, I preached occasionally on the Sabbath evening, with the sanction of my own minister, the Professor of Pastoral Theology, at two places in the district where I resided; but, having been engaged to preach in another village, I incurred the displeasure of the venerable pastor of a neighbouring congregation, who sent a letter interdicting me, and conveying such a reprehension as might with great propriety have been administered to one who was proposing to commit some crime of very considerable magnitude. I quite agree with an old writer who says, "Nor should men turn preachers as the river Nilus breeds frogs (saith Herodotus), when one half moveth before the other is made, and while it is yet but plain mud." Undoubtedly a very injurious influence both upon the training and the character of theological students must result from their being employed at an early period of their curriculum in the ministrations of the pulpit; and it cannot be supposed that they, with perhaps some rare exceptions, should be in any good degree

qualified to teach the people publicly, while they themselves have only begun to be professionally taught. But though, during the whole of their course they should be *students*, laying up (if I may so employ the apostle's language) a good foundation for the time to come, assiduously labouring to acquire those stores of knowledge from which themselves and the Church may afterwards reap advantage, yet it is highly desirable that in the more advanced stages they should have opportunities of learning by practice the art of preaching. This is now duly provided for in the United Presbyterian Church, though the excellent rules of Synod, it is to be feared, are not always strictly observed, and the rights and interests of probationers are sometimes disregarded,—a species of trespass for which it is an insufficient excuse that those who commit it expect themselves to suffer ere long in a similar way.

#### CLERICAL COSTUME.

“In 1610, King James, among other cares for his mother-kirk, sent directions from Court that all ministers should wear black clothes, and when in the pulpit should appear in black gowns. In general, however, the Presbyterian ministers preferred the old Geneva cloak, which had much the appearance of a gown.”<sup>1</sup> And still, “while performing their sacred duties, ministers in the Church of Scotland are attired in the Geneva gown and band, although in remote districts the band only is used, that

<sup>1</sup> M'Crie's “Story of the Scottish Church,” p. 157.

being the external badge of an ordained clergyman."<sup>1</sup> The "band" is "the only relic of the ancient *amice*, a linen vestment which was used in the ancient Church to cover the shoulders and neck of the priest."<sup>2</sup> It is said to be in Scotland more immediately "a remnant of the old cravat worn universally by the clergy a hundred years ago."<sup>3</sup>

"Harms," says Vinet, "gives a singular explanation of costume, which is, he says, designed to conceal either too great bodily advantages, or too great bodily imperfections. The idea of costume, according to us, is to efface or to cover the individual and the man of the passing age. In proportion as spirituality increases in a people, a special costume becomes less necessary, is even repugnant. I believe," he adds, "that in this respect we must follow the rules of the Church to which we have attached ourselves, and follow them freely and unhesitatingly."<sup>4</sup>

About the beginning of this century, the gown and band were unknown in the Secession; and clerical dress in other respects exhibited a greater diversity than is now seen. Even the black coat was not universal; and in regard to the inferior parts of the attire, very considerable license seems to have obtained. It is mentioned, for instance, in the memoir of Dr John Brown, that when a preacher, he appeared in the pulpit at Stow "dressed in light-coloured corded knee breeches and Hessian boots."

<sup>1</sup> "Religions of the World," p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Chambers' "Encyclopædia."

<sup>3</sup> Eadie's "Eccl. Cycl."

<sup>4</sup> "Pastoral Theology," part iii. sect. 1.



In the Latin Church wigs were worn for a long period by the clergy some time after the tonsure was introduced in the sixth century; and "in the Protestant Churches, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they were adopted by the ministers, and continued up to a recent period. They were in common use in Scotland till near the end of the last century."<sup>1</sup> In the early part of this century, it was the fashion to wear the hair powdered; and "it was less common for young ministers to have black coats than to have white locks. With brethren who were a little slovenly, it was not unusual to distribute the powder unequally over their heads, leaving patches of black or mere frizzled hair, and scattering heaps of the white dust upon their coats, so that the coats began, like their owners, to put on the appearance of venerable old age."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eadie's "Eccl. Cycl." "Archbishop Tillotson is the first prelate represented in a wig. It is, however, of moderate dimensions, and not much unlike a natural head of hair."—Planché's "History of British Costume," p. 395.

<sup>2</sup> Landreth's "Life of Thomson," p. 157.

NOTE, PAGE 103.

Mr Robert Raikes, a printer in Gloucester, has justly been considered the founder of Sabbath-schools, the existence of which, therefore, as a national institution, is to be dated from 1781. It is worthy of mention, however, that about a quarter of a century earlier a minister in one of the sections of the Secession Church, the Rev. James Morison of Norham, commenced a Sabbath-school. It was intended, chiefly, I suppose, for the children of his own congregation; but he received all who were willing to attend; and "on Monday evenings he assembled such of his Sabbath scholars as were of more mature age, in order to communicate to them further instruc-



tion." He also prepared a catechism for them, which was published with the somewhat singular title of "A New Year's Gift for Children."<sup>1</sup> It is said that a Sabbath-school was conducted by the Rev. W. Crawford, parish minister of Wilton, in the Presbytery of Jedburgh, a quarter of a century before Mr Morison opened his school. "It is recorded on Blair's monument in the Church of Brechin," wrote Dr Guthrie, in his "Autobiography" (p. 17), "that to him belongs the honour of instituting Sabbath-schools, he having commenced one in my native town several years before any were opened in England by Raikes of Gloucester, to whom the honour is generally assigned." "'Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona ;' and there were Sunday-schools outside as well as within the limits of the Church of England before Raikes' time. Cardinal Borromeo founded Sunday-schools in his diocese in the sixteenth century ; Joseph Alleine, the eminent nonconformist minister, made use of them in the seventeenth ; and Miss Hannah Ball, a Methodist, started a Sunday-school at High Wycombe in 1769. These, however, and others which might be mentioned, were but isolated efforts. The Sunday-school movement dates from the year 1780, and was the work of Raikes."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Memoir of Mr Morison, prefixed to a new edition of this Catechism in 1851.

<sup>2</sup> *The Churchman*, August 1880. See also the *Sunday at Home*, 1879.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *DISPENSATION OF THE SACRAMENTS.*

#### BAPTISM.

“**B**APTISM,” says the Directory, “is not to be unnecessarily delayed.” In a historical sketch of one of the oldest Secession congregations in Glasgow, it is remarked that “during the last century it seems to have been the custom to have the ordinance of baptism administered on the first Sabbath succeeding the birth of the child. In some instances, the child was baptised the very day it was born; and in not a few cases, the child born on Saturday was baptised next day.”<sup>1</sup> There can be little doubt that not unfrequently the anxiety shown by parents for so early baptism of their children arose from a superstitious feeling;<sup>2</sup> but this practice may have been, it probably was, for the most part, the consequence of a pious and enlightened regard for the ordinance; and, undoubtedly, this will tend to prevent “unnecessary delay.” In the congregation with which I am connected, during the last century, and the early

<sup>1</sup> *United Presbyterian Magazine*, Jan. 1849.

<sup>2</sup> See Jamieson’s “*Sermons on the Heart*,” vol. i. p. 294.

part of this, children were baptised commonly on the second or third Sabbath after their birth. In later times, there has usually been a somewhat longer interval between birth and baptism; and one advantage of this change is, that the mother generally has it in her power to be present along with her husband at the administration of the rite.

The Directory adds, "Nor is baptism to be administered in private places, or privately, but in the place of public worship, and in the face of the congregation." There may be cases in which circumstances warrant or render necessary the dispensation of baptism in the parents' own home; but in all ordinary cases it ought to be dispensed in the presence of the public assembly. This is obviously proper, because baptism not only is, on the part of God, significant of spiritual purification, of cleansing from the guilt and pollution of sin by the blood and the Spirit of Christ, and imports, on the part of the recipient, devotement to the faith and practice of Christianity, but also expresses, on the Church's part, acknowledgment of the person baptized as a member of the Church, entitled to its peculiar privileges. "By the want," too, "of the public dispensation of this ordinance, the Church is deprived of one special means of enjoying communion with Christ,"<sup>1</sup> and of receiving impressive instruction or admonition respecting the blessings of His salvation, and the obligations resting upon those who have been made partakers of these blessings. "Private

<sup>1</sup> "Testimony of Général Associate Synod," xix. 2, where some other objections are specified.

baptism" was one of the "Five Articles of Perth," which were renounced by the Assembly at the time of the Second Reformation. About fifty years before, "the minister of Tranent was suspended for baptizing an infant in a private house; but confessing his offence, he was ordained to make public repentance in the Kirk of Tranent before he be released."<sup>1</sup> In the religious denominations by the union of which the United Presbyterian Church was formed, and in this Church likewise, baptism in private has always been discouraged. If circumstances render it necessary, intimation is previously made from the pulpit of the place and the time; and the dispensation of the ordinance is usually accompanied with ministerial instruction, or "a word of sermon," as the common phrase is. As in many of the rural districts, a number of the families belonging to a congregation reside at considerable distances from the place of worship, it is much more frequently necessary in the country than in the towns to administer the ordinance privately. But this necessity, it might be supposed, would be greater in by-gone times than now, when travelling has been rendered more easy by the improvement of roads and otherwise, and places of worship have been multiplied; yet private baptism has somehow become much more frequent than it formerly was. During the ministry of the first pastor of the congregation with which I am connected, all the children whose names are in that part of the baptismal register which is in his own handwriting, extending from 1769 to

<sup>1</sup> Miller's "Communion for the Sick." See Note, p. 136.

1780, are stated to have been baptized “at the close of public worship,” except three, who were baptized “at the close of a diet of public examination.” But taking a period of about the same length in the middle of this century, I find that nearly five-twelfths of the children were baptized in their parents’ houses; and since that time the proportion has still increased.

The following is the mode of procedure prescribed by the Directory:—“Before baptism, the minister is to use some words of instruction touching the institution, nature, use, and ends of this sacrament;” “he is also to admonish all that are present to look back to their baptism,” &c. ; “he is to exhort the parent to consider the great mercy of God to him and his child, to bring up his child in the knowledge of the grounds of the Christian religion, and in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to let him know the danger of God’s wrath to himself and his child if he be negligent, requiring his solemn promise for the performance of this duty; this being done, prayer is also to be joined with the word of institution,” &c. ; “then the minister is to demand the name of the child, which being told him, he is to say, calling the child by his name, ‘I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;’ as he pronounceth these words he is to baptize the child with water, which, for the manner of doing it, is not only lawful, but sufficient and most expedient to be, by pouring or sprinkling of the water on the face of the child, without adding any other ceremony; this done, he is to give thanks and pray.” With

the exception of the first and second parts, this order is still generally followed. Some ministers, however, omit the naming of the child; and others, instead of addressing the child by its name, announce this immediately after the act of baptism. The practice was borrowed from the usages of the Jews at the time of circumcision (Luke i. 59-63); and in early times it was confirmed by the custom of giving new names to converted heathens when they were admitted to the fellowship of the Church. It is in itself a harmless practice, and it may be regarded as having a recommendation in the circumstance of its associating the name of a person in perpetual connection with the solemn recognition of him as a member of the Church of Christ. There is reason to fear, however, that it has led many to entertain a very absurd and even impious idea of the ordinance, and this, doubtless, is one reason why some ministers refuse to observe it.

In a written form in my possession which was used by a Secession minister in the early part of this century, and which may be regarded as a specimen, the parent is required to "instruct his child in the principles of our holy religion," not only "as contained at large in the Scriptures," but "as exhibited in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and in the Catechisms, larger and shorter, and the Presbyterial Form of Church Government," and "in the manner in which these standards are received among us, in the grounds of our Secession, and the reason of our continuance as a separate body, and the nature of the Testimony in behalf of the Reformation." No such extensive promise as this is required



now. It is still common, however, in addressing the parent, to use a set form, composed by each minister for himself, or obtained from some father or brother in the ministry. Would it not be an improvement to vary the address, as might in general be easily and naturally done, by making it have reference to the subject of the preceding sermon? Such an address, corresponding to that given at the communion, would be especially proper where the practice has been adopted of dispensing the ordinance at stated times. This is now done in many or most of the large congregations in the towns, the dispensation being commonly appropriated to one Sabbath in each month.

#### THE DISPENSATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

In the second chapter of the Acts, "the breaking of bread" seems to be mentioned as forming a part of the ordinary religious services of the Apostolic Church. There is another passage in the same book which has been understood to indicate that it was the custom of the early Christians in every place, when they met together on the first day of the week, to celebrate the sacred feast (Acts xx. 7); and the language of the apostle in 1 Cor. xi. 20 has been regarded as affording additional evidence, that always when the members of a church assembled themselves together, one special object was "to eat the Lord's Supper."<sup>1</sup> But the church at Corinth, like other Gentile churches, consisted of several small congrega-

<sup>1</sup> Dr John Brown's "Hints on the Lord's Supper," chap. iii. sect. 2. Alexander's "Life of Wardlaw," chap. iv.

tions, which met separately in the houses of some of the members (thus we read of the "church" or "assembly which was in the house" of Aquilla and Priscilla in that city); and the remarkable phrase employed by the apostle, "ye come together *into one place*," may refer, not to the ordinary meetings of the several congregations, but to a special stated meeting of them all, or of members belonging to them all, for the purpose of uniting in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. With reference to the first of these passages, too, it has been remarked that, "had the Supper been one of the stated ordinances, the historian would naturally have mentioned only the meeting on the first day of the week, and the notice of its dispensation, as a thing of course, would have occurred merely in the account of the exercises which took place."<sup>1</sup> It seems certain, however, that this ordinance was frequently observed by the primitive Christians; and there is surely nothing in our circumstances that requires, or even warrants, so wide a difference as has in this respect been made between their practice and ours. "The Communion, or Supper of our Lord," says the Westminster Directory, "is frequently to be celebrated; but how often may be considered and determined by the minister and other church governors of each congregation, as they shall find most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge." It appears from the First Book of Discipline that the Scottish Reformers contemplated the ordinary celebration of the

<sup>1</sup> Duncan's "Disquisition on the Lord's Supper," sect. iv., and Appendix.

Lord's Supper at least once every month. But afterwards, such a multiplicity of services came to be connected with it as necessarily implied its comparatively rare observance; and, indeed, instead of being observed monthly, it was made an annual festival. "The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," says Dr Jamieson, "is dispensed less frequently in the Church of Scotland than in most other Protestant churches, being celebrated only once a year in rural parishes, and twice in the towns, although in many of the chapels connected with the Scottish Establishment, the practice has for some years been introduced of having quarterly sacraments."<sup>1</sup> In the several congregations of the Secession Church, the ordinance was dispensed at least twice every year; and in many cases members of a congregation enjoyed other opportunities of communicating, at the dispensation of the sacrament in neighbouring churches, where their minister was accustomed to assist, his own pulpit being left vacant for the time. The author of the *Disquisition on the Lord's Supper* referred to above, in an appended review of Mason's "Letters on Communion," says, "The members of that congregation with which the reviewer is connected, though the ordinance be dispensed in it only twice, have opportunity of communicating, all of them four, or five, and some of them nine times a year." This pleasant and profitable circulation of communion, this extended fellowship, in which different congregations visibly proved themselves to be one body, as partakers of one bread, has now almost entirely ceased to be known.

<sup>1</sup> "Religions of the World," p. 131.

Special services, preparatory for the Communion, were held on two days of the week preceding the Sabbath on which it was to be dispensed. The first of these was the *Fast-day*, as it was called, being originally distinguished by an entire or a partial abstinence from food. This, though the name remains, does not now generally form a part of the observance, the object contemplated being simply the dedication of the day to the preparatory duties of humiliation or prayer. The public services of the *Fast-day* were usually commenced by the minister of the congregation himself, who read and briefly expounded an appropriate chapter or portion of Scripture, and then offered up a prayer which embraced a full and solemn confession of sins. He was followed by the brother or brethren engaged to assist, who preached two discourses suited to the occasion. At the close of public worship, the elders assembled in the open space at the pulpit, and, the Session having been constituted by prayer, tokens were distributed to the members of the congregation, who passed along, one after another, in front of the pulpit. Tokens were small flat pieces of lead, square or oval, on the one side of which was inscribed the name of the congregation, and on the other, frequently, the words, "This do in remembrance of Me," or some other appropriate text. They were given to intending communicants, to be handed by them to the elders in approaching to the Lord's table. The object was to secure that only members in full communion should partake of the sacrament. After this was done, young persons who had applied for admission to the

fellowship of the church, and had been examined by the minister, and approved by the Session, came forward, and having, in answer to a series of questions proposed to them, made an open profession of faith, were admitted by the vote of the Session, and received an appropriate exhortation from the minister. In many congregations, the tokens have been laid aside, and cards have been substituted for them, which are delivered by the elders to the members in their several districts during the week that precedes the Communion Sabbath. This method is recommended by the advantage of securing regular and frequent visitation of the members by their spiritual overseers, which, when rightly performed, is eminently fitted to promote the best interests of a congregation, and of all connected with it.

In former times, a strict observance of the Fast-day was enforced by the subjection to censure of church members who were found chargeable with not duly keeping it. Of this, the following extract from the minutes of Session of a Secession congregation in 1778 furnishes an instance:—"Compeared —— ——, who, by his own confession, was guilty of breaking a Fast-day, allowing his men to work. After dealing with him, the Session agreed that he should be rebuked; which was done accordingly."

Public worship was also observed on the afternoon of the Saturday before the Communion Sabbath, two discourses being then preached; and in former times, at summer sacraments in the country, there was a second service in the evening, which was intended chiefly for



members of other congregations who had come to enjoy the privileges of the sacramental season, and who experienced the kindness of Christian friends, manifesting itself in cheerful compliance with the apostolic injunctions, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging:" "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." With joy Christians in those days "saw," as one has said, "their brethren gathering from different quarters, to strengthen their hands in the good way and work of the Lord. Often they may have entertained them as angels of God, and found their hospitality amply repaid by refreshing, elevating, spiritual conversation, and by the mutually endearing intercourse of brotherly love."<sup>1</sup>

At the close of the service on Saturday, it was the custom of the minister to *pirleken*,<sup>2</sup> that is, to give a short address, in which he went over the leading topics of the discourses preached on that day, and on the Fast-day, and exhorted the people to improve what they had heard for the purpose of self-examination, and preparation for the solemn service in which they were to engage on the morrow. The older people were not at all pleased at the discontinuance of this practice. I remember an old lady who had gone from the country to reside in the metropolis, indicating very plainly in regard to the minister of the congregation with which she had connected herself, that her estimate of his abilities was

<sup>1</sup> "Disquisition," &c., p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> A corruption of the French *parler a la queue*, "speaking at the end."



considerably lowered when the Saturday service was closed without his appearing in the pulpit to perform the duty which in her experience had never before been omitted.

On the Sabbath, the services were commenced in the usual way,—with praise and prayer; after which the minister of the congregation preached what was called the “action-sermon.” Eadie says, “It was so named, in all probability, from the action or ceremonial for which it was the accustomed preparation.” The “action” is the name given to the Lord’s Supper in the Westminster Directory. But why was the ordinance so termed? The true explanation, undoubtedly, is that given by Dr Candlish in his treatise on the “Christian Sacraments.” This name, he says, “is taken from the phrase ‘*actio gratiarum*,’ ‘the giving of thanks.’” It is thus precisely of the same import as the name by which the ordinance is still often called, the Eucharist.<sup>1</sup> The action-sermon was followed by a prayer and the singing of a psalm; and then the peculiar services of the day were begun by the minister proceeding to what was called the *fencing of the tables*, which consisted of an address relating to the nature and design of the ordinance, and the character of those who have a right to engage in it. In this way, a fence, as it were, was placed around the Lord’s table, to guard it against the intrusion of any who did not possess the requisite qualification. This address, accordingly, was also called the *Debarrings*,

<sup>1</sup> In the English translation, by F. S., 1672, of Daille’s “Sermons on the Epistle to the Colossians,” the word “action” is frequently used to denote the discourse, or the service in general.

because the minister solemnly, and often in a very formal manner, debarred, or prohibited from approaching the Lord's table, "all such as were ignorant, scandalous, profane, or that lived in any sin or offence against their knowledge or conscience." In Knox's Liturgy, this was done in the following terms:—"In the name and authority of the Eternal God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, I excommunicate from this table all blasphemers of God, all idolaters, all murderers, all adulterers, all that be in malice or envy; all disobedient persons to father or mother, princes or magistrates, pastors or preachers; all thieves and deceivers of their neighbours; and, finally, all such as live a life directly fighting against the will of God; charging them, as they will answer in the presence of Him who is the righteous Judge, that they presume not to profane this most holy table. And yet this I pronounce not to seclude any penitent person, how grievous soever his sins before have been, so that he feel in his heart unfeigned repentance for the same; but only such as continue in sin without repentance. Neither yet is this pronounced against such as aspire to a greater perfection than they can in this present life attain unto," &c.

At the first dispensation of the Lord's Supper, none but communicants were present. This furnished no warrant for the practice which afterwards crept in of excluding all but members of the Church when the ordinance was observed. It might with equal reason have been argued that none but official men should partake, as the only persons present at the institution

were apostles.<sup>1</sup> It was the idea of awful mystery which began to be attached to the ordinance that led to this practice. First, the unconverted hearers were dismissed, and then the catechumens, or those who were still undergoing instruction in the principles of Christianity, the baptized faithful only remaining for the Communion service. The first two classes were sent away by the words, "Ite, missa est," "Go; the congregation is dismissed;" and this phrase is commonly supposed to be the origin of the term "mass," employed to denote the celebration of the Eucharist in the early and the Roman Catholic Church. John Brown of Haddington says, "About the eighth year of my age, I happened, in a crowd, to push into the church of Abernethy on a Sacrament Sabbath. Before I was excluded (for at that time it was usual to admit into the church few or none in the time of communicating, but those who intended to join in eating the Lord's Supper, the rest being supplied with service in another assembly), I heard one or two tables served by a minister who spoke much in commendation of Christ: this in a sweet and delightful manner captivated my young affections, and has since made me think that children should never be kept out of church on such occasions." But the reason of their exclusion in former times is not to be found in any such ideas being entertained respecting the ordinance by the early Seceders or other Scottish Presbyterians as those that anciently prevailed in the Church, but simply, I suppose, in the circumstance that often the places of worship were in-

<sup>1</sup> "Disquisition," &c., p. 64.

sufficient to accommodate more than the intending communicants. Anderson, in his reply to Rhind's "Apology" (1714), says, "'Tis true that there are many others present oftentimes besides those that communicate. But where is the harm of this? Does it hinder the devotion of the communicants that others are looking on them? Is it not rather an engagement upon them to carry themselves with the more solemn gravity?" The reference here, however, seems to be to church members of other congregations being present, who did not communicate at the time. But the very nature and design of the ordinance indicates that it should be public, and that its publicity should not be limited to church members themselves. The service, on the part of communicants, consists in "showing the Lord's death,"—in announcing or proclaiming it (as the term used by the apostle properly means),—exhibiting it not only to one another, or to their brethren in the Lord, but to men in general; and often have the effects on spectators, especially on young persons who witnessed it, been beneficial to their souls, and redounded to the honour of the Saviour, and the advancement of His kingdom.

The introductory address was followed by the singing of an appropriate psalm, during which the sacramental elements were brought forward by the elders, and placed on the communion-table. The minister then descended from the pulpit to the head of the table, read the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper in the eleventh chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, and offered up a thanksgiving for the benefits of re-

demption procured by the Redeemer's death, with prayer for the Divine blessing on the dispensation of the ordinance, as the appointed memorial of that great event.<sup>1</sup>

Many ministers were accustomed to lift a portion of the bread and the cup before offering up prayer ; and by some this was considered as an essential part of the

<sup>1</sup> This was commonly called the "consecration prayer." Dr Brown having in one of his sacramental discourses employed the phrase, "the consecrated elements," says in a note, "In using such language, the author wishes it to be distinctly understood that he considers the elements in the Lord's Supper as consecrated or set apart, not by what is usually termed 'the consecration prayer,' but by the original institution of Jesus Christ. He thinks it, to say the least, very incautious language which is often used by ministers on such occasions, 'We hereby set apart from a common to a sacred use, so much,' etc. All that a Christian minister can do, and all he ought to attempt to do, is to give thanks for the great blessing of redemption through the death of Christ, and for this divinely appointed representation of it, and to supplicate the Divine blessing on the ordinance."<sup>1</sup> But though we have no right to consecrate the elements in the sense in which they were consecrated by our Lord, that is, to appoint authoritatively these particular elements to be symbols of His body and blood, yet, just as we set apart such persons as Scripture has marked out to sacred office in the Church, and invoke the Divine blessing to accompany their labours, so we may be said to sanctify or set apart by prayer the bread and the part of the wine employed in the ordinance of the Supper, to the sacred purpose intended, invoking the Divine blessing on the reception of these by the communicants ; and this, doubtless, is all that the term "consecration" when applied to the prayer that precedes the act of communicating, is usually conceived to import. Even the articles of ordinary food are said to be "sanctified" "by prayer," as well as "by the word of God," or the Divine appointment. It may be better, however, simply to "give thanks," or "bless," the latter term, in this connection, being evidently of the same import as the former.

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<sup>1</sup> Part i., Dis. iii.



ordinance. In 1782, Mr Smyton, an Anti-Burgher minister at Kilmaurs, in Ayrshire, who practised this mode, insisted in the Church Courts that a perfect uniformity should be observed, and that those of his brethren whose practice differed from his own, should be enjoined to adopt the method which he pursued ; but the Synod decided that the matter should be one of mutual forbearance. Mr Smyton left the fellowship of the Synod ; and several people in Paisley and Greenock and some other places sympathised with him, and were popularly called "lifters." A minister of Falkirk also joined him ; but the whole controversy speedily sunk into oblivion.<sup>1</sup> Some of those who practised the taking of the elements before prayer, regarded this as a significant action, intended to represent our Lord's assumption of human nature to die in it. Others observed the practice because they considered it as "belonging to the standing order of the sacramental Supper, in the proper, complete, decent, and solemn manner of its administration, conformable to our Lord's example." It is undoubtedly an error to regard it as a sign of the incarnation of Christ, for His death is declared to be the sole subject of celebration in the sacred Supper ; and if this ordinance does remind us of His incarnation, it is simply because His death presupposes His possession of a human nature. The taking of the bread and the cup before the giving of thanks was simply a Jewish custom, which was followed by our Lord at ordinary meals, as we know from the narrative of the

<sup>1</sup> M'Kerrow's "Hist.," vol. i. pp. 422-9. Eadie's "Eecl. Cycl.," Art. *Lifters*.



miraculous feeding of the multitude. There was, indeed, a special propriety in the observance of this custom by our Lord in the present instance, because it was thus shown that he was about to institute a new ordinance, distinct from that which he had just been celebrating with His disciples. This reason does not apply to our observance of the ordinance ; and it should not be forgotten that our Lord did not twice take the bread and the cup, first before and again after the prayer, but held them in His hand, according to the Jewish custom, while He was giving thanks. His example in this respect should be followed by those who imitate Him in taking the elements before giving thanks, because it would prevent the supposition that it is a distinct significant action, to which some meaning not implied in the other parts of the ordinance should be attached.

After giving thanks, the minister proceeded to what was called the *servicing of the table*. A short appropriate address was delivered to those seated at the table ; after which, the elements were put into their hands, the minister at the same time repeating the words of institution ; and when the act of communicating was finished, a few words of exhortation were added ; and the communicants were then dismissed from the table with a benediction. The seats set apart for the communicants were two or more long double pews immediately before the pulpit, having each a narrow table extending from the one end to the other, which was covered with a white linen cloth. As in most cases, these table-seats were incapable of accommodating all the intending communicants at one

time, there was commonly a number of services, the intervals being filled up with singing, during which those who had partaken slowly retired, and their places were immediately occupied by others. This part of the work, with the exception of the first table service, was usually performed by the brethren who were assisting the minister of the congregation; and much benefit was frequently reaped, both by communicants and others, from the varied addresses for which a succession of services afforded opportunity. The psalm commonly sung during the several times when the table-seats were being filled was the hundred and third, which is that specified in Knox's liturgy, and the tune almost always used was Coleshill, the precentor reading the line. When the service of communicating had been finished, a hymn or song of praise was sung, in imitation of the example of our Lord at the institution of the ordinance;<sup>1</sup> after which an additional address, called the *exhortation*, and intended for all who had been partaking of the Supper, was given from the pulpit, sometimes by the pastor himself, but usually by one of his assistants. The peculiar services of the day were then followed by a concluding sermon, which at the summer sacrament in country places was preached in the open air.

At the dispensation of the sacrament in the congregation with which I am connected, there were sometimes no fewer than seven or eight table services; and public wor-

<sup>1</sup> It is likely that the hymn sung by our Lord and His disciples was a part of the great Hallel, some portions of which are eminently suited to the ordinance, such as Psalm cxvi.

ship, commencing at eleven o'clock forenoon, or it might be half-an-hour earlier, was often not concluded till about eight in the evening. In the town churches, the mode of observance was the same, and the work was equally prolonged. I have an account of a communion Sabbath in a Secession Church in Glasgow, in November 1814, in which it is stated that "nine services, which might number twelve hundred communicants, protracted the work till nine in the evening."

So great, usually, was the concourse of people on summer sacramental occasions in the country, that it was found necessary to have a succession of sermons preached without doors, while the peculiar services were going on within. This may be said to have been a continuation of the field-preaching practised in the times of the Covenant, though it dates from an earlier period, and, indeed, may be said to be an imitation of the example of our Lord Himself and His apostles, who proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom on the sea-shore, on the mountain's side, and on the grassy plain. The following interesting description of a sacramental scene two centuries ago is given by Blackader, an eye-witness and minister on the occasion: "Meantime, the communion elements had been prepared, and the people in Teviotdale advertised. Mr Welsh and Mr Riddell had reached the place on Saturday. When Mr Blackader arrived, he found a great assembly, and still gathering from all airts." "The place where we convened was every way commodious, and seemed to have been formed on purpose. It was a green and pleasant haugh, fast by the water side. On

either hand there was a spacious brae, in form of a half-round, covered with delightful pasture, and rising with a gentle slope to a goodly height. Above us was the clear blue sky, for it was a sweet and calm Sabbath morning, promising to be indeed one of the days of the Son of Man. There was a solemnity in the place befitting the occasion, and elevating the whole soul to a pure and holy frame. The communion tables were spread on the green by the water, and around them the people had arranged themselves in decent order. But the far greater multitude sat on the brae face, which was crowded from top to bottom—full as pleasant a sight as ever was seen of that sort.” “All the regular forms were gone through. The communicants entered at one end, and retired at the other, a way being kept clear to take their seats again on the hill-side. There were two long tables, and one short, across the head. About a hundred sat at every side. There were sixteen tables in all, so that about three thousand two hundred communicated that day. The communion was peaceably concluded, all the people heartily offering up their gratitude, and singing with a joyful voice to the Rock of their salvation. It was pleasant, as the night fell, to hear their melody swelling in full unison along the hill, the whole congregation joining with one accord, and praising God with the voice of psalms.” In the early days of the Secession Church, great crowds often assembled on occasion of the dispensation of the Supper. “I was present,” says Ralph Erskine, “at the sacrament at Orwell, where a vast multitude was gathered, and upwards of five thousand

did communicate." This field-preaching at sacramental seasons was commonly called *tent-preaching*, because the minister addressed the people from a tent, usually a wooden fabric, kept in readiness for the occasion, and erected a day or two before the Communion Sabbath.

In consequence of the more frequent dispensation of the Lord's Supper, and from the operation of various other causes, the numbers assembling on sacramental occasions gradually diminished in most places, and the open-air services were found to be no longer necessary. In the southern parts of Scotland, tent-preaching is now known only as a matter of history. But "the spectacle," says Jamieson, writing twelve years ago, "is still exhibited, with all its ancient accompaniments, in those parishes which lie in the *embouchure* of the Highlands, and which are inhabited by a mixed population, speaking partly the English and partly the Gaelic language."

"That abuses were occasionally committed," says Dr John Brown, "cannot be doubted; yet still it is scarcely possible not to look back with regret to the impressive spectacle, which, twenty years ago, was not uncommon in Scotland, of an assembly of some thousands, on a fine Sabbath evening, on a mountain-side, listening with deep attention and apparent devotion to the good tidings of great joy delivered with solemn interest and tender affection. Multitudes have been obliged to say, on such occasions, and the recollection has been sweet to their dying hour, 'Surely, the Lord is in this place. How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the



house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"<sup>1</sup> Mr Gilfillan remarks that "the abuse was almost entirely confined to the neighbourhood of great cities. At all events," he says, "amid the peaceful solitudes of Perthshire, we never witnessed aught but what was reverent, interesting, and even imposing."<sup>2</sup> The writer of these pages can bear similar testimony. At his native place the tent was erected at the foot of a *brae*, in a plantation at a little distance from the church; and the audience sat on the grassy slope, screened from the rays of the sun by the canopy of leaves, while the pleasant murmur of a stream, gently flowing over a mill-dam that was near, did not at all disturb their worship. The scene was lovely and delightful in no ordinary degree; nor do I ever remember seeing its amenity marred by unbecoming behaviour on the part of any individuals in the assembly, which was frequently large, and, from the commencement of the service till the evening, was, to a considerable extent, composed of young persons belonging to several congregations.

On the Monday, the congregation assembled once more [to engage in religious exercises, especially in thanksgiving; and two sermons were preached, which were generally of a practical and hortatory kind. The introduction of this practice is noticed by Dr M'Crie in "The Story of the Scottish Church." Giving an account of the revival at the Kirk of Shotts, on occasion of the dispensation of the Lord's Supper there on the 20th of

<sup>1</sup> "Discourses suited to the Administration, &c.," p. 223. 1823.

<sup>2</sup> "The Martyrs, &c., of the Scottish Covenant," p. 125.



June 1630, when an immense concourse of people had gathered from all parts, he says, "It had not been usual before this time to have service on the Monday; but God had vouchsafed so much of His gracious presence on the preceding days of this solemnity, that they knew not how to part on this Monday without thanksgiving and praise." John Livingstone preached; and to his sermon, "under the blessing of God, no less than five hundred people ascribed their conversion. And in gratitude for such a remarkable token of the Divine countenance on this day, the Church of Scotland has ever since devoted a part of the Monday after a Communion Sabbath to the duty of public thanksgiving."

The Monday service, and the service on Saturday too, have now, to a large extent, been discontinued, especially in the older of the two large dissenting Presbyterian Churches. In many country congregations, the Fast-day, also, has been abolished; and though it is still maintained in almost all the congregations of the Presbyterian Churches in the cities and large towns, yet as great numbers now take advantage of it for excursions by the railway or steamboat, and not a few make it a day, not of amusement only, but of dissipation and revelry, it is doubted by many who themselves still conform to its religious observance, whether it is right to keep up the annual or half-yearly Fast-day in circumstances so different from those that formerly existed, and in which it is so sadly perverted and abused. For many ages of the Christian Church, the Lord's Supper was observed without any regular attention to public preparatory service;

and the more frequent celebration of the ordinance which has now happily become common in the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, will in all probability lead ere long to the entire cessation of the practice of observing certain days in connection with it.

The long-continued practice, too, of having a succession of table-services has now given place in many congregations to simultaneous communion. This innovation was first made, it is believed, in the United Secession congregation of Broughton Place, Edinburgh. Dr Brown's distinguished biographer having remarked, with reference to his ministry there, that "his discourses preached before the administration of the Lord's Supper were invariably of an elevated and inspiring character," and that "these occurred every two months,—the greatest approach made by him to what he held in theory,—the weekly celebration of the Communion," says further, "The effect of these sermons was heightened by the presence of the communicants in one compact body in the lower part of the church, and by their simultaneously partaking of the ordinance,—a deviation from the old Scottish custom since widely followed, though the act of communion does not often so immediately succeed the sermon as it did in Broughton Place." The Westminster Directory says, "The table being before decently covered, and so conveniently placed that the communicants may orderly *sit about or at it*, the minister is to begin the action," etc. In his "Journal" Lightfoot says, "Then fell we upon the sitting about the table at the receiving of the Sacrament; and the Scots Commis-

sioners professed they could not take it in any sense but sitting to the table, and that they are so engaged from Scotland to take it so ; and therefore they either desired a recommitment of this passage, or that their sense might be expressed in the margin, which cost a long and large debate. At last, it was concluded thus to have it in the text, ' About the table, or at it, as in the Church of Scotland ;' and so it was the law of the Assembly, that we might, at liberty, either cause the communicants to sit at the table, or at some distance from it."<sup>1</sup>

Formerly, when there was a succession of table services, there was only one act of thanksgiving. Now, when there is simultaneous communion, it is usual to give thanks twice, that is, before the giving of the cup, as well as before the giving of the bread. This is done in imitation of our Lord, who, it is expressly stated by two of the evangelists, "took bread and blessed," and afterwards "took the cup and gave thanks." But the repetition of thanksgiving was a Jewish custom, and with the Jews was the mode of connecting the different parts of a feast, when the materials of it were successively presented. With us, on the contrary, this may rather seem to break the ordinance into two parts, which have a different spiritual meaning. "When the bread and the wine," says Dr King, "were not together on the table, a repetition of thanksgiving was calculated to associate them in the mind, and to suggest their connection. But when they are simultaneously in view, to offer separate thanksgivings, without any apparent reason, rather in-

<sup>1</sup> Eadie's "Eccl. Cycl.," Art. *Eucharist*.

duces an impression of severance and dissimilarity.”<sup>1</sup> It is generally, however, thought good that ministers, in dispensing the ordinance, should copy in this particular the example of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> “The Lord’s Supper,” p. 45.

NOTE, PAGE 112. COMMUNION FOR THE SICK.

Private baptism was not less strongly condemned by Acts of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland than private communion. Yet, while the former, notwithstanding these Acts, has become a common practice, the latter is still unknown in the Scottish Presbyterian Churches. The early Scottish Reformers, however, like Luther, Calvin, and others on the Continent, “did not consider the celebration of the Lord’s Supper so inseparably tied to the public congregation that they would not administer it elsewhere.” John Knox “dispensed it again and again in the houses of noblemen and others,” in Calder House, for instance, the residence of Sir James Sandilands, afterwards Baron Torphichen. This, however, is obviously different from the private communion sanctioned by the Articles of Perth, which was the administration of the rite to the sick. But even the latter was approved of by some of the Reformers. Calvin, for example, “was strongly in favour of communion to the sick on scriptural conditions.” In one of his letters he says, “Many and powerful reasons induce me not to refuse the Lord’s Supper to the sick. A little meeting of relatives and neighbours should be called, that the sacrament be administered according to our Lord’s command. The mystery should be clearly explained, and everything done as in a church.”<sup>1</sup> The Westminster Confession having stated that the minister, in dispensing the ordinance, is to give both the bread and cup to the communicants, adds, “but to none who are not then present in the congregation,” and condemns “private masses, or receiving the sacrament by the priest, or *any other*, alone.” Dr A. A. Hodge, in his Commentary on the Confession, says, “In particular cases it (the Lord’s Supper) may be administered in private houses, for the benefit of Christians long confined by sickness, provided that the officers and a sufficient number

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<sup>1</sup> “Communion for the Sick,” by the Rev. John Miller, M.A., Dunse.

of the members of the church be present to preserve the true character of the ordinance as a communion." A similar statement had previously been made by another Princeton divine, Dr Samuel Miller, in his able treatise on Presbyterianism. "It has sometimes happened," he says, "that a devout and exemplary communicant of our Church, after long enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary, has been confined for several, perhaps for many years, to a bed of sickness, and been, of course, wholly unable to enjoy a communion season in the ordinary form. In such cases, Presbyterian ministers have sometimes taken the elders of the church with them, and also invited half-a-dozen friends of the sick person,—thus making, in reality, 'a church,' meeting by its representatives,—and administered the communion in the sick chamber. To this no valid objection is perceived." In an Outline of the Doctrine, Worship, Polity, and History of the Presbyterian Church of England, prepared by the Rev. Donald Fraser, D.D., at the request of the Synod's Publications Committee, it is said, "The Holy Communion is not carried about to the sick as a viaticum; but there is no objection to its observance in a private chamber in cases of long-continued affliction, provided that the privilege be not given to one person, but shared by a Christian company, in accordance with the spirit of the ordinance." I am not aware that this has yet been done by any Presbyterian ministers in Scotland. But the introduction of the practice has recently been earnestly pleaded for by a minister of the Free Church, from whose treatise some extracts have already been made, namely, the Rev. John Miller of Dunse; and in his Preface, Mr Miller says, "So far as he (the author) is aware, the subject has not been discussed with a view to its adoption among us; but if the almost unanimous agreement of opinion which the author has been pleased to find among the many he has spoken to—lay and clerical—in different denominations, may be taken as an indication of the mind of Christian people in general on the subject, the time would seem to have come when the practice of administering the communion to the sick ought to be adopted." Some of Mr Miller's arguments from the testimony of Scripture, and from the spiritual utility of the ordinance, it would not, I think, be difficult to answer; but he seems to be quite successful in showing that communion for the sick, on the conditions specified by him, is no more contrary to the enactments of the Scottish Church than the private administration of baptism, as it is now commonly practised.



## CHAPTER X.

### *COVENANTING.*

**C**ONFEDERATION is a measure dictated by reason, which the members of any community may adopt for mutual defence or support in the prosecution of a great cause. Leagues and covenants, accordingly, have been formed by secular communities for civil, commercial, and political purposes. But the members of the Church have not only rights common to them with other men, but peculiar privileges, far more valuable than those of any secular society ; these, when assailed, they are required to defend and maintain ; and, according to the calls of Providence, the whole or a part of the Church may warrantably enter into solemn engagements to stand fast, striving together for the faith of the Gospel, and the liberty with which Christ has made His people free ; and their engagements will appropriately assume the form of vows expressly made to God, and may even be fitly accompanied with the sanction of an oath.<sup>1</sup> Such covenanting was observed under inspired authority by the Church during the ancient dispensation of religion ; and

<sup>1</sup> “ Testimony of United Secession Church,” chap. xi.



the practice may be traced in the history of the Christian Church in the primitive times. Pliny, the governor of Bithynia, in his letter to Trajan, the Roman Emperor, stating the account which the Christians gave of themselves and their worship in a time of severe persecution, says "that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight, and to bind themselves by an oath with an obligation of not committing any wickedness." "Compelled to meet secretly, or as they could get opportunity, they were wont to engage in some vow to abide faithful, and avoid the pollutions of the world, pledging themselves to one another to stand firm as an host valiant for the truth, and confirming the engagement with an oath,"<sup>1</sup> which Pliny calls by the name applied to the military oath of the Romans (*sacramentum*). In the first ages of the Reformation, the practice was adopted by the Protestant princes of Germany, and the Protestant Church of France. In Scotland, before the establishment of the Reformation, "several bonds or covenants had been entered into by the Protestant nobility, gentry, and others, in which they pledged themselves to defend and support the true religion against its enemies; and to the confederation thus solemnly cemented may be traced much of the success which attended their struggles." When the Protestant had become the established religion, "this solemnity assumed the peculiar form of a national deed; and our ancestors were naturally led, by similarity of circumstances, to imitate the covenants of ancient Israel, when king, priests, and people swore mutual

<sup>1</sup> "Disquisition on the Lord's Supper," p. 107.

allegiance to God.”<sup>1</sup> That which is commonly called “The National Covenant” was occasioned by a dread of the re-introduction of Popery in 1581, and contained an implicit abjuration of the leading errors and corruptions of Popery, with a solemn engagement, confirmed by an oath, to support the Protestant religion as established in Scotland.<sup>2</sup> This was renewed at different times during the reign of James; and afterwards, in consequence of the strenuous attempts of his son and successor to effect the complete establishment of Episcopacy in Scotland, it was revived with great solemnity in the year 1638, a bond being appended to it, suited to the then existing circumstances, in which the subscribers engaged “to adhere to and defend the true religion, and to forbear the practice of all innovations already introduced into the worship of God, and to labour by all means lawful to recover the purity and liberty of the Gospel, as it was” previously “professed and established.” In England, many were anxious to procure a more perfect reformation than had yet been attained, especially in the worship, discipline, and government of the Church; and, as a bond of union between the friends of reformation in England and those in Scotland, the “Solemn League and Covenant” was framed in the year 1643, and was sworn and subscribed by many of all ranks in both nations, who thus solemnly abjured both popery and prelacy, and combined for their mutual defence against the imposition of these systems. After the Restoration, the Covenant was

<sup>1</sup> M’Crie, “Story, &c.,” p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson’s “Hist. of Scotland,” book vii.

condemned by Parliament, and ordered to be burned by the hands of the common executioner ; and it was finally set aside at the Revolution.

These covenants, it has been justly remarked, “viewed as leagues of mutual defence against ‘the popish and prelatical factions’ with which” our reforming ancestors “had so frequently to struggle, demand our approbation ; and if the framers and subscribers had limited themselves to this object, their conduct would have been unexceptionable. But, like all the parties who rose and fell during that eventful period, they made aggressions on the religious liberties of others ; they made use of the covenant as an instrument for enforcing a uniformity in the matter of religion by means of civil penalties ; they violated the rights of conscience, when they made the subscribing of the bond the test of a person’s holding any office, civil, military, or ecclesiastical. In this respect, their conduct deserves not praise but blame.”<sup>1</sup> It may be added that these compulsory measures were plainly incompatible with the very nature of covenanting, which is essentially a voluntary deed,<sup>2</sup> as well as contrary to the grand principle of the Reformation, Liberty of Conscience. The trying circumstances in which our reforming ancestors were placed, from the spirit and efforts of the enemies of their religion and liberties, may furnish an

<sup>1</sup> M’Kerrow’s “Hist. of the Sec. Church,” vol. i. p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noticed, however, that as all the previous bonds were voluntary, so were the first formation and subscriptions of the National Covenant. Robertson’s “Hist.,” b. vii. “Speech in the General Associate Synod on Covenanting,” by the Rev. Alex. Duncan, Midcalder, 1819.

apology for them, but not a vindication of their measures; for, whatever may be the system of error or corruption with which Christians have to contend, it is only by spiritual weapons that they are allowed to sustain the cause of revealed religion, and confederation in its behalf, if it assume a political aspect, is not conducted on the true principles of the kingdom of Christ, as a kingdom which is "not of this world." At the same time, it should be remembered that liberty of conscience, which secures the free exercise of our religion, is a natural right, and that as, when this is invaded, church members, as members of the civil community, may enter into public leagues and covenants in defence of it, so, in preventing the design of such engagement, they may, on the common principle of self-preservation, warrantably adopt such measures, and use such means as are competent to be used in defence of other natural rights.<sup>1</sup> But it is obviously proper to avoid, if possible, combining the defence of the natural right with that of spiritual privileges in one federal bond; and in no circumstances can it be lawful to use external force or civil penalties for the support or advancement of Christianity; while nothing can be more inconsistent and unreasonable than for those who are contending for the right to themselves of worshipping God according to their consciences, to refuse that right to any others, and to punish as criminals all who avow religious principles or obscure modes of worship different from their own.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Testimony of United Secession Church," chap. xi.

<sup>2</sup> Our ancestors maintained that "though it be the sinful practice of the Church of Rome to force men and women to be of their

“It was the opinion of the fathers of the Secession that the Church of Scotland had to some extent thrown away an opportunity of prosecuting the great principles of the Reformation at the time of the Revolution settlement. The first Seceders on this account naturally sought to link themselves and their Church history as directly as

religion, which is superstitious and idolatrous, yet it is not so to others who have the true religion among them.” Dr Dickson’s “Truth’s Victory,” quoted in Panton’s “Inquiry into the Obligation of Religious Covenants upon Posterity,” p. 96. “This,” says Dr Panton, “he gives on the very sense of those passages in the Confession of Faith which treat of the magistrates’ power in matters of religion.” But it was not peculiar to the Covenanters to hold these intolerant principles, and to act upon them. In this respect, they differed no wise from other Protestant Churches at that time. “Even the Independents themselves, the great advocates of unbounded liberty, were as great enemies to the rights of conscience, and guilty of as unjustifiable severities as any class of men. The leaders of that sect, in the Assembly of Westminster, held the opinion that the excommunicated, if they continued impenitent, were to be delivered into the hands of the civil magistrate, to be punished according to their desert. This was not a speculative opinion, but a principle upon which they acted. At the very time when they were pleading for unbounded liberty at home, they were treating the Presbyterians in New England with the utmost rigour. Not a single Dissenter was permitted to live there. Whoever presumed to worship God in separate congregations, let their life and doctrine be ever so pure, were delivered up to the civil magistrate to be punished with banishment, perpetual slavery, or death itself.” Panton’s “Inquiry,” p. 97. It is ever to be deeply lamented that the Puritans and Covenanters should have acted to such an extent on the very principles on which their enemies and persecutors acted. See a Review of Symington’s “Character and Claims of the Scottish Martyrs,” in the *Edinburgh Theological Magazine* for April 1832. The radical error of our Covenanting ancestors may be said to have been the overlooking of the distinction between the Church and the nation, and seeking, not only to ally, but to incorporate or identify the one with the other.



possible with the Covenanting period. Their minds were strongly directed to the federal transactions of the Church; they perceived, as they thought, a sanction for such transactions in the Word of God;"<sup>1</sup> and they, therefore, revived the practice; but, at the same time, freed it in a great measure from the objectionable character which it formerly possessed. "The bond," says M'Kerrow, "which the Associate Presbytery prepared and subscribed, and in which they required all the congregations under their charge to join, breathes much less of the spirit of intolerance than either the National Covenant or the Solemn League and Covenant. There is indeed little or nothing in it to which any member of a Presbyterian Church may not cordially assent. It was drawn up by the Presbytery 'in a suitableness to their present circumstances;' and they carefully avoid any allusion to civil pains and penalties being employed to enforce an agreement with their Covenant."<sup>2</sup>

The following is the account given in Gib's "Display of the Secession Testimony," of the manner in which the work of covenanting was usually performed. When any congregation was about to engage in it, public intimation was made several weeks beforehand, and frequent meetings of session were held to converse with and receive such as offered themselves to join. On the day appointed, which was usually the fast before the communion Sabbath, the minister of the place was commonly assisted by two or more of his brethren, and the work

<sup>1</sup> Mr Gill's "Life of Heugh," chap. vii.

<sup>2</sup> "Hist. of the Sec. Church," vol. i. pp. 252-3.



proceeded in the following manner:—First, a sermon was preached, accompanied by the usual devotional exercises, after which the minister took notice of the solemn work in which they were about to engage, and having prayed, he read out the names of those who were to join, all of them being properly seated together. Then the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant* were read, commonly by the minister of the place. The assisting ministers then read the *Acknowledgment of Sins* and the *Engagement to Duties*, and that in several divisions, by turns, each usually beginning with a short prayer. Next, the presiding minister offered up a prayer of solemn confession and supplication, which was followed with praise. The oath of the Bond was then administered, all the people who joined standing up, and holding up their right hands; and an exhortation having been addressed to the covenanters, this part of the work was followed with prayer and praise. The bond was then subscribed by those who had sworn, and the whole work of the day was concluded with a sermon. Mr Gib notes:—“Women, as well as men, are admitted to swear and subscribe the bond, and this is conformable to Scripture example, in the tenth chapter of Nehemiah.”

In the Narrative prefixed to the Testimony of the General Associate (or Anti-Burgher) Synod, emitted in 1804, the following statement is made respecting their “separating brethren, commonly known by the designation of *Burghers*.” “It is remarkable that, from the time of the breach, they desisted from covenanting

work, and never to this day has it been practised among them." Covenanting work was practised in all the congregations of the Anti-Burgher Secession, and it was expected that all students of divinity before receiving license, or preachers before being ordained, should join in the covenant. In the Basis of Union agreed upon by the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church in 1820, the Synod "expresses an unfeigned veneration for our Reforming ancestors, and a deep sense of the inestimable value of the benefits which accrue to us from their noble and successful efforts in the cause of civil and religious freedom, approves of the method adopted by them for mutual excitement and encouragement, by solemn confederation and vows to God," and "acknowledges that we are under high obligations to maintain and prosecute the work of Reformation begun and to a great extent carried on by them;" but there is no recognition of descending federal obligation, and while it is asserted that "public religious vowing or covenanting is a moral duty, to be practised when the circumstances of Providence require it," it is at the same time declared that, "as the duty, from its nature, is occasional, not stated, and as there may be a diversity of sentiment respecting the reasonableness of it," so, "while no obstruction shall be thrown in the way, but every scriptural facility shall be afforded to those who have clearness to proceed in it, yet its observance shall not be required of any in order to Church communion." A Bond framed by the Anti-Burgher Synod was handed over to the Synod of the United Church, and was "received

and entered upon its records, as the bond to be used by all who should see it to be their duty to proceed in that work." But it is stated by the writer of the *Life of Dr Heugh*, that, except in a single instance, this bond was never used in the service for which it was designed.

A few of the Anti-Burgher ministers were opposed to the deed of Synod, adopting the Basis of Union, and solemnly protested against it, for this, among other reasons, because, according to the Basis, the relation of the Seceders to the Covenanting Church of Scotland was not duly recognised, and because it "laid an insuperable bar in the way of proceeding in the duty of public religious covenanting," as performed in time past. These formed themselves into a separate body, which was afterwards united with what was called the "Constitutional Presbytery," the latter having been formed, in 1806, by some ministers (including Professor Bruce and Dr M'Crie) who had left the Anti-Burgher Synod because their views respecting the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion differed from those sanctioned by the Synod. The united body adopted the designation, "The Associate Synod of Original Seceders;" and, holding the permanent obligation of the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant, they continued the practice of renewing these Covenants in a Bond suited to the times.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the Wesleyan Methodist Chapels a "Covenant service" is held in the beginning of each year. "Religions of the World," p. 239.

## CHAPTER XI.

### *PECUNIARY CONTRIBUTION.*

A DOCTOR of Divinity, lately deceased, once remarked that the mode of expression usually employed by ministers when proceeding to give out the first psalm from the pulpit, namely, "Let us begin the public worship of God," was not correct, for the public worship of God commenced at the door or in the lobby of the church. In saying so, he referred to the depositing by the people of their weekly offerings in the plates or basins placed for receiving them at the entrance of the sanctuary ; and the remark is founded on a right view of pecuniary contribution, which, however, it is to be feared, is not always or often realised as it ought to be by the members of the church. To the Israelites it was said, with reference to their great convocations for Divine worship, "None shall appear before the Lord empty : every man shall give as he is able ;" and this law was to continue in force under the Christian dispensation. In one of the Psalms, which evidently refers to the times of the Gospel, it is said, "Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, the glory due unto His name ; bring an offering, and come into His courts ;" and,

accordingly, as contribution of worldly substance for the support and extension of the Gospel, and the supply of the temporal wants of brethren, is one of the sacrifices or oblations expressly required from Christians, so it is mentioned, by the name of "the fellowship," as a stated part of the ordinary worship of the church at Jerusalem ; and the same view of it is given in the apostolic order to some of the churches of the Gentiles "concerning the collection for the saints" in Judea (1 Cor. xvi. 2), "the first day of the week" being specified as the proper time for making the collection, because it was the season of their regular assembling of themselves together for the worship of God. Christians are thus taught to regard their contributions as acts of religious service. But the members of our churches are apt to forget this when observing the usual mode in which their contributions are given. This may be said to have come down to us from the Old Testament times (2 Kings xii. ; Luke xxi. 1-4). It is not, however, universally practised. In some Presbyterian congregations in Scotland, the mode observed in the English Church is followed. The collection is taken after the sermon, or immediately before the benediction, by means of *ladles*, or small wooden basins or boxes, which, having long handles attached to them, are thereby passed along before the worshippers in their several pews. This mode, while it possesses the advantage of direct application being made to each individual,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This, however, may be thought liable to an objection, which is stated by Vinet, in his "Pastoral Theology," part iii. sect. 1. "It will be well for the pastor," he says, "not to allow the plate to circulate. The sound is uncongenial, and *it may force people to give*. It would be better to place some receptacle at each door."



is also more in conformity with the principle of contribution being, as truly as praise or prayer, a religious observance.

In the Liturgy of the Church of England, it is directed that, when the offertory is taken, "The deacons, churchwardens, or other fit persons appointed for that purpose, shall receive the alms for the poor, and other devotions of the people, in a decent basin, provided for that purpose, and reverently bring it to the priest, who shall humbly present and place it upon the holy table;" and in the prayer which follows, the worshippers say, "We humbly beseech Thee most mercifully to accept our alms and oblations." "No Church in Christendom," says Dean Howson, "declares more emphatically than ours that the offering of our substance is properly a part of Divine worship; for not only is the act of giving made customary during our most sacred service, but it is associated with the most expressive liturgical language. We are admonished in this way that our gifts are to be received, not merely as a result of human charity, but as a sacrifice to Almighty God."<sup>1</sup>

Milton says that "presbyter is priest writ large:" it is more correct to say that "priest" is "presbyter" writ small; but the one name is apt to suggest ideas which the other does not; and the act of presenting the alms and oblations on the holy table (which by many is called the altar), has too much the semblance of sacerdotal function to be likely to commend itself to adoption in Presbyterian communions. But it is exceedingly

<sup>1</sup> *The Churchman*, Jan. 1882.



desirable that the view in which pecuniary contribution is thus presented should be more deeply impressed on the minds of the members of our churches. Let them learn to look on this as the performance of a religious service. Let every contribution be a "spiritual sacrifice," offered up to God through Jesus Christ, an act of homage to the Divine authority, an act of obedience to the law of Christ, an expression of gratitude to Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us. Were the members of our churches universally influenced by those sentiments and motives, they would all give regularly and proportionately, as well as cheerfully; their own spiritual welfare would be promoted by the offerings they should make, and their liberality would be greatly increased; and thus impressive proof would be given of the excellence and sufficiency of the plan which the Lord has ordained for sustaining and diffusing Christianity in the world.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of late, there has been a very considerable increase of liberality in contributions, both for the support and the extension of the Gospel. Goldsmith begins his inimitable description of a "Village Preacher" with these lines:—

‘A man he was to all the country dear,  
And passing rich with forty pounds a year.’

But in the last century the stipend of many Dissenting ministers was less than this. "For many years," said Christmas Evans, "I received but seventeen pounds per annum for all my services." In his first charge, which was at Kibworth, in 1723, Doddridge's income amounted to thirty-five pounds a year; "but," he said, "as provisions are cheap, I might manage to live upon ten." (Stamford's "Philip Doddridge, pp. 25, 58.) In the "Baptist Register," edited by Dr Kippon, minister of Carter Lane Chapel, Southwark, "a friend writes of Mr William Hogue, the minister of Scarborough, 'Our beloved pastor is advancing in years, and almost blind. He

is a zealous, faithful labourer in this corner of Christ's vineyard. He has a wife and three children at home. His last year's salary amounted to thirty pounds, which is the most we ever raised for him." (Quoted in Spurgeon's "Metropolitan Tabernacle History," p. 50.) Remuneration of ministerial labour seems to have been but little better on the other side of the Atlantic. In Dr Lyman Beecher's Autobiography, it is stated, respecting his first charge, that for "nearly a century the terms of the provision for the pastor of East Hampton, Long Island, had been forty-five pounds annually, with the privilege of having grain first ground at the mill on Monday morning, and one-fourth of the whales stranded on the beach." (*B. & F. E. Review*, July 1864.) William Brown, first minister of Craigdam Secession Church, was settled in 1752 with a stipend of fifteen pounds. (McKelvie's "Annals," etc.) Forty pounds a year was the stipend of the first pastor of the congregation with which I am connected at the commencement of his ministry in 1766, and it remained without augmentation for a number of years. When, after his death, the congregation resolved to apply for a moderation, Nov. 1799, they "agreed to give fifty-five pounds stipend, with the land and labouring, dwelling-house, and office-houses, with the carriage of what coals the minister shall need for his house." Afterwards, the stipend was raised to seventy pounds, then to eighty, and at length it reached one hundred pounds, which sum, with an allowance of a few pounds for sacramental expenses, it never exceeded. At that time few country congregations gave their minister a larger stipend than this; and such being the case, there would undoubtedly be many a minister who—amidst increasing demands of the family for support and education, and notwithstanding the most economical management on the part of a spouse who eminently realised the character of "the virtuous woman" as described by King Lemuel's mother—would have occasion, at one time or another, to make such a record as this, which occurs in the Journal of one of those ministers, "Great straits as to worldly circumstances." (See also Dr Thomson's "Life of Principal Harper," p. 75.) Of late, however, there has, as I have already remarked, been a great enlargement of Christian liberality. Many of the members of our churches have come to understand better the principles and rules, and to feel more deeply the motives and obligations, of religious pecuniary contribution, with reference to the support of their pastors and teachers, as well as to the extension of the Gospel throughout the world; and not a few small

country congregations are abounding and excelling in this grace. Probably there is no office-bearer, nor even any member, of any of our churches, exactly resembling an elder in the south country in the early part of this century, who, when he died, left some thousands to be squandered by his relatives. This man, I have been told, when there was a special collection, was wont to double his gift ; but his extraordinary liberality, on such an occasion, did not exhibit an instance of substitution of gold, or even silver, for brass, for his usual contribution was no more than twice as much as the poor widow cast into the treasury.

## CHAPTER XII.

### *DISCIPLINE.*

**D**ISCIPLINE, in the wide sense of the term, comprehends all the actual exercise of Church-government by the appointed office-bearers; and the term is frequently used in this sense. What are called the First and Second Books of Discipline, connected with the Reformation in our own country, were a somewhat rude but highly laudable attempt at a digest of forms of procedure in all cases of ecclesiastical order. In its more usual and restricted sense, the term denotes the means of securing the purity of the Church in doctrine and worship, in profession and practice, and, particularly, the mode of dealing with offenders. It implies a power of censure, and is often used to denote the infliction of it.

The censures are admonition, rebuke, suspension, and excommunication. These are purely spiritual or ecclesiastical acts; but in some periods of the Church, censures were accompanied or followed by temporal or civil penalties—by persecution on the part of Christians, as when many in the early ages were denied all social

intercourse, and were obliged to banish themselves to heathen lands, or perish for want, or as when, in subsequent times, offenders, on being cast out of the Church, were regarded as delivered up to the secular power for such punishment as it is wont to inflict,—imprisonment, confiscation of goods, or death. In the Romish Church, penitential discipline consists in punishment of different kinds, such as alms, fasting, self-flagellation, wearing of hair-shirts, repetition of a certain number of prayers, enjoined or authoritatively imposed, for the faults which a person has committed. But even in the Protestant Churches a rigorous penance was prescribed at the period of the Reformation, and long maintained its ground. Shame, which was originally connected with censure only as a proof of humiliation before God, and a powerful motive to deter both the offender in future, and others, from courses or deeds to which it must necessarily attach, was afterwards considered as a penalty, the infliction of which formed part of the sentence pronounced on the offender, to be effected by repeated or long-continued exposure, in ignominious circumstances, either at the door of the church, or in a conspicuous place in the interior allotted for the purpose. In the records of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1576, we find this enactment—The Kirk ordains that offenders who have been excommunicated “shall make public repentance, at their own kirks, bareheaded and barefooted, three,” or in some cases six, “several days of preaching, standing at the kirk door betwixt the assemblies, secluded from

prayers before sermon, and then entering, and sitting in the public place, all the time of the sermon, and departing before the latter prayer ;” and that other offenders not excommunicated “shall be placed in the public place, where they shall be known from the rest of the people,” etc. In Scottish churches, two hundred years ago, there was a prominent seat, called “the cutty stool,” on which offenders of a particular class sat during service, to be afterwards called up and formally rebuked ; and there was also a collar of iron, called “the joughs” or “juggs” (probably from the Latin word *jugum*, a yoke), which, being attached by a chain to a post at the porch or door of the church, was clasped round the necks of certain transgressors, who were obliged to stand in this ecclesiastical pillory, exposed to public gaze.<sup>1</sup> Mulcts or fines, too, were connected with censure, the payment of which ensured absolution, and was sometimes accepted instead of submission to the censure. So recently as in the early part of the present century, the General Associate Synod, in a public document, “testified against the practice which very generally prevailed in the National Church, of accepting money as a penalty for offences, instead of inflicting the censures instituted by Christ,” condemning this as “a remnant of Popery, and nearly allied to that antichristian system of penance, according to which almost every transgression of the moral law has its price.”

The offences which subject to discipline may all be ranked under the conduct of individuals who propagate

<sup>1</sup> Eadie’s “Eccl. Cycl.”



opinions, prosecute courses, or commit deeds at variance with the known principles of the society with which they have connected themselves, or with the fundamental doctrines and explicit laws of Christianity. The alleged total want or grievous relaxation of discipline in the Established Church was one of the original grounds of the Secession; and the founders of this denomination regarded it as an object of primary importance to introduce a more spiritual and efficient system. But in the early period of its history, there was frequently displayed a tendency to excessive strictness in the administration of discipline. In zeal for the interests of truth and holiness, too little regard was manifested to the dictates of brotherly kindness and charity. Actions that were indifferent in themselves, or, if reprehensible, were so in but a slight degree, were regarded as very serious offences, and those chargeable with them were subjected to censure.

Among these offences, *occasional hearing*, or joining in the acts of worship with other churches, was one that proved a fruitful source of business to Sessions. In a sketch of the history of one of the oldest Secession congregations in Glasgow, which appeared in the *United Presbyterian Magazine* of 1849, the following statements are made: "Again and again persons were summoned before the Session, and rebuked for hearing ministers of the Establishment, Mr M'Millan (Cameronian), and especially Mr Fisher (Burgher). But the most remarkable case is recorded in a minute of November 1755. A man and his wife, having been at a marriage where Mr

Fisher officiated, and having dined with him afterwards, were called before the Session, and rebuked. Another person happening to meet Mr Fisher in a friend's house, and hear him ask a blessing, was dealt with in like manner. In the year 1750, another member was rebuked before the Session for his sin and scandal in being married by a minister of the Established Church, and was admonished to behave more stedfastly for the future." I have not found in the minutes of Session of the congregation with which I am connected any record of dealing with individuals in such cases as these; but occasional hearing is frequently mentioned as a ground of censure: for example,—“May 8, 1774, J. F., after dealing, confessed that he was overtaken with drink, and had attended the Established Church one Sabbath; and professing sorrow for the same, the Session appointed him to be rebuked, which was accordingly done.” “Sept. 24, compeared A. G., who confessed that he had been hearing a minister of the present Establishment, also a minister of the Burgher denomination; after a considerable dealing with him, the Session agreed that he should be admonished, which was done accordingly.”

In the Testimony of 1804, the General Associate Synod testifies against “all occasional communion, in public ordinances, with churches which are in such a state of apostasy from, or opposition to, the truth, as to render constant communion with them unlawful.”

In the Established Church, censure of occasional hearing was unknown. But in 1799, a law was passed which prohibited ministers of that Church from employ-

ing any minister of another denomination to preach in their pulpits. In 1843 the restriction was abolished; the pulpits of the Establishment were opened to Evangelical Dissenters, in the hope that "this would tend, indirectly, yet speedily and certainly, to a much more thorough and complete amalgamation of the various Presbyterian bodies in Scotland." But immediately after the Disruption, this liberal act was rescinded.

*Promiscuous dancing*, especially when occurring at penny weddings or balls, was considered a scandal demanding the infliction of censure. "Penny Wedding," or "Pennie Brydal," was "a wedding at which the guests contributed money for their entertainment. It is probably a relic of the ancient custom of friends conferring gifts on a married pair on the morning after marriage. Some, by the savings of such a wedding, avowedly gain as much as to form a small stock."<sup>1</sup> The following Act was passed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in February 1645:—"The General Assembly, considering the great profanity and several abuses which usually fall forth at pennie-brydals, proving fruitful seminaries of lasciviousness and debauchery, as well by the excessive number of people convened thereto, as by the extortion of them therein, and licentiousness thereat, ordain every Presbytery in this kingdom to take such special care for restraining these abuses as they shall think fit in their several bounds *respective*." The following instances of sessional dealing with offenders in this particular may be given as a specimen:—"27th August

<sup>1</sup> Jamieson's "Scottish Dictionary."

1770. Appeared J. M., who, according to information given to the Session, was guilty of swearing, going to penny-weddings, and joining in promiscuous dancing, and unstedfastness in his profession ; which, being urged upon him, was confessed by him. The Session then dealt at considerable length with him about his offence, and finding that he had no impression of it, and acknowledged that he had not been exercised about it, they dismissed him, and recommended him to set some time apart for that end." "June 1817. Compeared — and — — ; they confessed their attendance at the ball and dancing at —, and being dealt with, professed their sorrow for their conduct ; and the Session agreed that they should be admonished, which was done accordingly."

The minister of the congregation from the minutes of the Session of which these extracts have been made, having indicated his wish that cases of mere dancing should no longer be taken up by the Session, the elders were all disposed to agree to this proposal, except one, who appealed to the passage in the book of Job where it is said of the wicked, "Their children dance." The minister said that if he examined the passage he would see that this was mentioned as a sign of their prosperity, not of their wickedness, and would find some other things specified which could by no means be regarded as indications of character. (Job xxi.)

It would be well if the discipline of the Church were still faithfully administered in such cases as the following :—"Jan. 18, 1763. D. P. was charged with a

habitual neglect of family worship. Being present, was called upon, but denied the charge as laid, but acknowledged some omissions. Was admonished to more circumspection in his family." "Jan. 3, 1779. Compared J. B., who confessed that he had given ground of offence by unnecessary travelling, and visiting, and unguarded language on the Sabbath-day."

In former times, rebuke for certain offences, and for others when aggravated, was administered in the public assembly on the Lord's day. This practice has been discontinued. The following statement in the "Rules and Forms of Procedure of one Presbyterian Church," indicates the general observance in the others too: "Circumstances may render it necessary, owing to the aggravations or publicity of the offence, that rebuke should be administered publicly before the congregation; but in many cases, rebuke in the Session or Presbytery is sufficient."

In general, the discipline of the Church is not exercised now with the same degree of strictness as it was in former times. In some departments, it must be admitted, the administration of discipline in the days of our fathers displayed an illiberality and a rigour from which it is now happily freed. But there is a tendency generally manifested in these days to go too far in the opposite direction. "For many years," said the late Dr Balmer, who was characterised in an eminent degree by the spirit both of love and of a sound mind, "I have been painfully impressed with the apprehension that a relaxed discipline is the most formidable danger which menaces our own denomination, and almost every denomination



in this part of the empire. Perhaps I ought rather to say, that there is reason to apprehend that it is an evil which actually exists to an alarming extent ; and that it is one of the chief obstacles to a more plentiful effusion of Divine influence, and of course to a religious revival.”

Dr Johnson, in his tour in the Hebrides, as Boswell tells us, had a debate with a minister there (grand-uncle of the late Lord Macaulay) on creeds and confessions, which ended in Johnson saying to him, “Sir, you are a bigot to laxness.” While we rejoice in “the breaking down of the isolation and jealousy of Christian bodies in which this century began,” and in “the unwonted growth of evangelic liberality and Christian union by which it has been distinguished,” let us at the same time sedulously guard against the danger of substituting latitudinarianism for exclusiveness, and of becoming bigots and slaves to a laxness, in opinion and practice, in communion and discipline, which, if universally prevalent, might apparently exhibit a remarkable fulfilment of the ancient prediction of “the wolf dwelling with the lamb, and the leopard lying down with the kid, and none hurting or destroying in all God’s holy mountains,” but would in reality convert the Church into a scene that might more justly be considered as realising the apocalyptic description of Babylon the Great, which represents it as having become “the habitation of demons, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”



### *CONCLUSION.*

There can be no question that some of the changes in the conduct of the services of the Church that have been adverted to, are changes to the better. But it may be doubted whether improvement in this respect has been accompanied with progress in all those things that pertain or are more intimately related to the essence of Christian worship. Our pious forefathers were distinguished by many excellencies, which we should do well to imitate. One of these was an ardent love to the sanctuary and its services, evinced by the regularity and constancy of their attendance upon it; and in this they were followers of the most illustrious of the saints in ancient times, and of the Christians of the primitive age. May all the congregations of the Scottish Presbyterian Churches be blessed by the combined exhibition in the character and conduct of their members of those excellencies which, in by-gone times, the Christians of our land eminently exemplified, and of those in respect of which the religious aspect of the present day may be justly regarded as superior to that of the days that are past. May all, under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, be partakers of that true religion which consists in the knowledge and faith and fear and love of God, as He is

revealed in the person and doctrine and work of Jesus Christ, His Son, whom He sent into the world to declare His character and counsels and will to mankind, and to be the propitiation for their sins ! Amen.

APPENDIX.



## APPENDIX.

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### I.

#### *PASTORAL VISITATION AND EXAMINATION.*

“IT is the duty of the minister,” says the Westminster Directory, “not only to teach the people committed to his charge in public, but privately, and particularly to admonish, reprove, and comfort them upon all seasonable occasions, so far as his time, and strength, and personal safety will permit.” This duty has in general been faithfully performed by the ministers of the Scottish Presbyterian Churches. Besides attending with special care to the afflicted, they have regularly prosecuted the work of domestic visitation, the ministers of country places going through the entire congregation once every year, and those of large congregations in the towns, in the course of two or three years. The mode of conducting such visitation is described by Dr Jamieson, thus:—“Having previously announced the time and place, the minister enters into each house in succession, the inmates being generally prepared to

welcome him with a respectful reception, and after spending some little time in the interchange of friendly conversation, inquiring with paternal interest into the welfare of the household, the progress of education among the children, or the prospects of those who are setting out in life, he engages in a short religious service, either with the members of that family alone, or with a few of the contiguous families, congregated in some neighbouring house capable of affording the requisite accommodation." This practice is still generally maintained, but perhaps not in the same methodical manner as in by-gone times, when it was usual for the minister not only to engage in prayer in each house, but to give an address nearly as long as some now think a pulpit discourse should be. It was customary, too, for the elder of each district to accompany the minister in his visitation of the families in it. This of course was necessary or expedient on his first visitation, to introduce him to his people, and, in some instances, it might afterwards be dispensed with. I am not aware that it is now the practice anywhere, and perhaps it is better, on the whole, that minister and elder should each visit apart. The attendance of an elder considerably increased the mental labour of the minister, as it was considered necessary to vary the address in the several houses visited; and thus it was also a disadvantage in other respects, for the effort to advance something new in every house might often defeat the best purposes of visitation, sometimes by precluding general advices which the state of his flock might seem to require, and



more frequently by constraining the speaker to resort to subjects inapplicable to the circumstances of the family. I have heard my father and predecessor, however, relate one instance in which the reverse of the second of the results now mentioned was unintentionally realized. In the first year of his ministry, he was one day, when accompanied by the elder of the district, at a loss for a topic in the last house that was to be visited : the only topic he could think of was the duty incumbent on husbands and wives of dwelling together in unity and love. When they had left the house, the elder remarked that the man and his wife would be sure to blame him for having told the minister about them, the admonition that had been given being one that they very much needed.

Besides such visitation there was in past times an exercise that formed part of the system of private pastoral employment, which has now fallen into desuetude. This was the exercise of *Examination*, "a valuable usage," says Dr Cairns, "assembling both young and old, district by district, to be catechised by their minister. This sometimes degenerated into routine, or took the more questionable shape of a theological fencing-match between the minister and some of the more disputatious of his hearers. But, when rightly conducted, it tended to keep alive religious knowledge, and gave scope for easy and familiar instruction."<sup>1</sup> It is, unquestionably, of great advantage for a minister to be well acquainted with the state of his congregation in regard to religious know-

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Dr Brown," p. 70.

ledge, since this may serve to regulate both the themes and the manner of his public ministrations, and enable him to judge what progress his hearers are making, and there can be no doubt that catechising is an excellent means of ascertaining the measure of religious knowledge already possessed, and not only so, but of imparting needed instruction, and inciting to further improvement. It is to be regretted, therefore, that this usage has become obsolete ; and though “it must be allowed that, to a considerable extent, a valuable ‘substitute for it has sprung up in the far greater frequency of Bible-classes, and the multiplication of Sabbath-schools, yet the consideration of its value in the hands of good men of former ages, and experience of the very indigested and crude religious knowledge of too many adults in our congregations, and members even on our communion-rolls, suggest that it would, at least, be worth consideration whether, in some form or other, it might be desirable to revive—so that all might have the benefit of it—the practice of catechetical instruction.”<sup>1</sup>

It may be interesting to some readers to be informed of the manner in which this exercise was conducted ; and as I cannot furnish an account from personal knowledge, having been present when a youth only on one such occasion, of which I do not retain any very distinct recollection, I shall borrow the graphic description given by Dr Edmond, in his memoir of Dr Stark, of one of that eminent minister’s diets of examination, to which, probably, in almost all its particulars, those of other ministers were ex-

<sup>1</sup> Edmond’s “Memoir of Dr Stark of Dennyloanhead.”

actly similar:—"The district is an entirely rural one; and one of the farmers has prepared his barn for the accommodation of the assembly. As the hour draws near, individuals, and groups of parents and children, may be observed advancing along various lines of road, and converging to the place of meeting. For a little space as they arrive, they may be noticed clustering around the house, exchanging friendly greetings, till the pastor's approach warns them to enter. The minister arrives, and takes his place. Devotional exercises succeed, and voices of psalm ascend amid the bare and rugged roof beams, and solemn prayer invokes a blessing on the services of the day. The names of the examinable persons in the district are then read over, and each in turn repeats the answer to some question in the Shorter Catechism,<sup>1</sup> the grey-haired no more exempted than the young, the absentees being at the same time ascertained and noted. The examiner returns to the head of the list, and calling again on the first examinee present, takes up some special subject in the wide range of theology,

<sup>1</sup> Failure to answer correctly a question of the Shorter Catechism was severely reprov'd; but sometimes the minister himself got into difficulty. On one occasion a venerable Secession minister having asked, "What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?" the individual examined began his reply—as the answers in the Catechism usually begin—with an echo of the question, "The misery of that estate whereinto man fell,"—and then he stuck. The minister said to him, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself; a child at school could answer that question. 'The misery of that estate whereinto man fell,'"—and here, too, he found he could go no farther. He tried a second time, but in vain, till some one sitting near him whispered the commencing words of the answer: "All mankind by their fall."

doctrinal or practical, and proposes a series of questions tending to evoke, with impressive fulness, the teaching of Scripture regarding it. The questions are interspersed with copious, easy, conversational exposition. The auditor may note besides, that these questions are not proposed for the purpose of putting the examined to the test, of eliciting the amount of their knowledge, or discovering their lack, but much more for the purpose of affording opportunity for familiar and pointed application. And yet the intelligent listener will observe that the queries are not all on the same level of facility, and the examination has not proceeded far before he discovers that the minister has in some way formed his estimate of the theological attainments of his people, and knows well when he may safely lead the answerer into deeper waters, and leave the exposition of some point in the system more to himself." "In this way more than an hour has passed, and the list is but half exhausted, when there is a pause, and the children present are invited to approach the minister, and ranging themselves in a circle around him, he proceeds in turn to feed the lambs." When the children have been catechised, "the examination of the adults is resumed. At length, the last name on the list has been called ; and so have the questions been proportioned and allotted, that the subject of the day, or some branch of it, has been fully discussed, and a complete view given of its various parts." Besides the persons examined, there has been "an outer circle of auditors who have been drinking in those full and familiar instructions ; and some especially are there who are

seldom absent from these scenes of edification. They were at the last diet ; and they contemplate attending the next, though the place may be widely distant ; they wish to hear the discussion of the next subject in the order of the general plan which the minister is pursuing ; and they are in this way going through a systematic course of tuition in divinity." "Devotional exercises close ; and with lingering salutations, and friendly inquiries between pastor and flock, the people betake themselves to their respective homes."

Visitation was often in the country attended with a considerable amount of fatiguing exertion, in consequence of the families that belonged to a congregation being scattered over an extensive district, and the roads in many places being bad. "In former times," says the writer of the "Life of a Scottish Probationer," "the first equipment for his work which the probationer had to provide was a horse, on which he rode from church to church, with his sermons and changes of raiment in his saddle-bags." Thus the young preacher became, as the late Dr Harper "was accustomed laughingly to say, with allusion to the Church militant, 'one of the Church's mounted cavalry.'"<sup>1</sup> It was usual for country ministers to furnish themselves with the same means for performing their journeys in the visitation of their flocks, and the discharge of other ecclesiastical duties. Sometimes, there was but little work for the minister's horse ; and the loan of it was often asked, and easily obtained,—in which case, not unfrequently, the animal was made to know that there

<sup>1</sup> Life, by Dr Thomson, p. 20.



are different kinds of riders ; for, whether good equestrians or not, the ministers in general failed not to exemplify the character of “ a righteous man ” in “ regarding the life of their beasts.” Excellent horsemen some of them were. Mr Moncrieff of Abernethy was intense and ardent in his riding, as in everything else he did. John Brown, M.D., in his inimitable letter to Dr Cairns, speaking of his father, says, “ The exercise and the excitement he most delighted in was riding. With the exception of that great genius in more than horsemanship, Andrew Ducrow, I never saw a man sit a horse as he did. He seemed inspired, gay, erect, full of the joy of life, fearless, and secure.” One of Dr Brown’s colleagues in the Divinity Hall of the Secession Church, a minister in the country, usually rode with a very moderate degree of celerity; but in his younger days, he would sometimes indulge in a gallop. On one occasion, when he visited a brother minister in the north, the latter, who had a horse of his own, got the loan of another for his friend, and they rode out together on the highway, and, after a while, “ tried a race.” As they were galloping along an individual whom they passed cried out to them, “ A merciful man is merciful to his beast.” The rider on the borrowed horse replied, “ This is not *my* beast.” “ Ah ! but,” said his friend, “ it is *his*.”

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## II.

*BEHAVIOUR IN CHURCH.*

When Paul preached at Troas, "there sat in the window a young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep." "This," says Barnes, "is an instance of sleeping in public worship that has some apology. The late hour of the night, and the length of the service, were the excuse. But, though the thing is often done now, yet how seldom is a sleeper in church furnished with an excuse for it. No practice is more shameful, disrespectful, and abominable than that so common of sleeping in the house of God." "If," says Hall, "the apostle so indignantly inquires of the Corinthians whether they have not houses to eat and drink in, may we not, with equal propriety, ask those who indulge in this practice, whether they have not beds to sleep in, that they convert the house of God into a dormitory?"

So far as I know, this practice has never been made a subject of formal discipline. But very often censure has been administered by the preacher; and such rebuke has not unfrequently had a degree of humour in it, which, however, only rendered it more severe and effective, though it may sometimes have been not quite becoming. "The minister," it is stated in the Memoir of Mrs Somerville, "would sometimes startle the congregation by calling out to some culprit, "Sit up there; how daur ye sleep i' the kirk?" Sometimes the mode of address was, "Sit up, or I'll name ye oot."<sup>1</sup> Mr Shirra

<sup>1</sup> Dean Ramsay's "Reminiscences," p. 185.

of Kirkcaldy, seeing a young man asleep in the gallery one Sabbath afternoon, called to the people who were sitting near the sleeper to awaken him ; “ for,” said he, “ if he fall down dead, as the young man did in Paul’s days, he may lie dead for me ; I am not able, like Paul, to raise him to life again.”<sup>1</sup> I remember a minister telling me of the following reproof, which he administered one afternoon. The weather was very warm, and he said he did not wonder much that some of his hearers should feel drowsy,—those, especially, who had been working hard in the fields during the week. “ But,” he added, “ I was surprised to see some sound asleep, just now, who, I observed, had a good nap in the forenoon.” This minister was found fault with by one of his hearers, who was a notorious sleeper in church, for not concluding his discourse with separate applications of the subject to the two cases of saints and sinners. “ Well,” he said, “ I shall do that next Sabbath, when I trust you will be present.” So, next Sabbath, in concluding his sermon, he said he would address each of the two great classes into which his hearers might be divided. “ I shall begin,” he said, “ by addressing sinners ; and, first, I shall speak to persons who sleep in the house of God.” I have heard of another minister who, having in his sermon used the word “ hyperbole,” said, “ Perhaps some of you may not know what this word means ; I

<sup>1</sup> “Memoir,” by Dr J. B. Johnston, p. 46. Something similar was said by Dean Swift, if I remember right, on one occasion. Some striking instances of reproof of sleepers are given in the *Sword and Trowel*, in a paper, “Odds and Ends about Preaching and Hearing.”

will explain it to you ; it is a figure of speech which expresses more than is really intended. For instance, were I to say that the whole of you were asleep just now, that would be a hyperbole ; for probably not more than the half were so."

In times long past, it seems to have been part of the duty of the beadle or church-officer to awaken sleepers. Speaking of the Scottish Church in the early part of the seventeenth century, M'Crie says, "As to the people generally, they seem to have conducted themselves during divine service with suitable decorum ; though the following extract from the Minutes of the Kirk-Session of Perth would indicate that clergymen were occasionally exposed to annoyances similar to those of which they have had to complain in more modern times : ' John Tenender, Session-officer, is ordained to have his red staff in the kirk on the Sabbath-days, therewith to wauken sleepers, and to remove greeting bairns furth of the kirk.'"<sup>1</sup> In more recent times, gentler methods were sometimes adopted. I have heard of an old minister who, when he observed drowsiness overcoming many in his audience, would kindly say,—pointing to a particular part of the church,—“Send round the *mulls* there.” Quite lately, the snuff-box was used for this purpose, and perhaps the practice still exists, in some of the churches in the north. Mr Spurgeon, having preached at a High-

<sup>1</sup> “Story,” &c., p. 168. Robert Chambers, in his “Illustrations of the Author of Waverley,” gives an amusing account of the usefulness in this way of a rustic “natural,” the counterpart of “David Gellatley.”

land village, where a great multitude assembled to hear him, afterwards confessed that "though he tried all means to move them, the cold blood of the men far north was undisturbed by his appeals, and the only movement seen in the congregation was a free use of the snuff-box, the men using a small spoon to shovel the snuff from the box to the nose."<sup>1</sup> Sometimes individuals were requested to "dunch" their slumbering neighbours; and not unfrequently the performance of this act of kindness was, as the minister intended it to be, scarcely less beneficial to the agents themselves than to the subjects of their operation.

I remember that in by-gone days, it was not unusual for individuals to resist the languor stealing over them by changing their posture, and standing up. "They did so, Mr Landreth says, "occasionally to the dismay of an Edinburgh clergyman, who misinterpreted this device against the treacherous invasion of sleep, and imagined that the four or five persons who almost simultaneously had sprung to their feet in different parts of the church were about to protest or argue against his doctrine. Yet," he adds, "even those perpendicular hearers who hoped to strengthen their resistance by firmly placing their back against the pillars that supported the gallery, were occasionally overcome, and they stood wavering and swaying like the tower of Pisa—their deflections all the more apparent from the perfect steadiness of those associated pillars."<sup>2</sup> Those, however, who had recourse

<sup>1</sup> *B. and F. E. Review*, Jan. 1866.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of Dr Thomson," p. 32.

to this expedient for driving away drowsiness, were deserving of some degree of commendation, or, though sometimes trying it unsuccessfully, or so as only to make the impropriety more visible, were less to be blamed than others who made no efforts of resistance ; and especially than the worst class of all the sleepers, those who, almost as soon as the text had been given out, deliberately composed themselves to sleep, by placing head and arms on the book-board, or by settling themselves down in a comfortable reclining posture. I remember an individual of this class, who, one Sabbath, having as usual fallen asleep during the sermon, slept on throughout the closing devotional services, and awoke just when his fellow-worshippers had all left the church. I have, for a considerable number of years now, observed none of this description of worshippers in the public assembly, no individuals who habitually indulge in the practice of sleeping, but only some occasionally showing symptoms of drowsiness, induced by the infirmities of age, or the lassitude resulting from a long journey to church. An instructive anecdote is told of a member of the Secession congregation of West Linton, John Murray, grandfather of Dr Murray, Lecturer on Chemistry in Edinburgh. His residence was nearly ten miles distant from the place of worship, and he was apt to be drowsy during the time of Divine service. To prevent this, he was wont to arrive an hour before the service began, and, laying himself down on the seat, he slept soundly till the entrance of his fellow-worshippers awoke him.<sup>1</sup> There has, un-

<sup>1</sup> *United Secession Magazine*, 1840, p. 507.



doubtedly, been a great improvement in this respect, which, however, may to some extent be owing simply to the shortening of the sermon and other parts of the services.

There is another practice, very annoying to ministers, which, though not wholly avoidable, might be subjected to such restraint as would make it in a great measure cease to be a disturbance. A late minister in Glasgow, in a letter to me, said, "The universal and incessant coughing has been a greater annoyance to me than any one but a minister would believe. I am beginning to make up my mind to it in some degree; but even yesterday I was almost on the point of saying, 'Well, if you are to go on in that way, I may just as well hold my tongue.' Ministers all around have been scolding their people this winter for non-attendance, which, however, I have not done, and don't mean to do; for what is the use of coming to church to do nothing but cough?" Hugh Miller, speaking of Dr M'Crie, says, that one Sabbath when he was hearing him, "his voice, which is not naturally strong, was nearly drowned by loud and continuous coughing, which arose from every corner of the church. For some time he went on without any seeming embarrassment; but, just when in the middle of an important argument, made a full stop. In a moment, every eye was fixed on the doctor, and such was the silence caused by this attention, that, for the space of a minute you might have heard a pin fall. 'I see, my brethren, you can all be quiet enough when I am quiet,' was his mild and some-



what humorous reproof; and such was the effect that for the remainder of the day he received very little interruption." The same thing was done by Rowland Hill once when he saw some sleeping. Pausing, he said, "I have heard that the miller can sleep while the mill is going; but if it stops, it awakens him. I'll try this method;" and so he sat down, and soon saw an aroused audience.<sup>1</sup> A writer in the *Christian Instructor*, about sixty years ago, giving an account of "A Sabbath in Paris," mentions, as a peculiarity that struck him in the church service which he attended, "the long pauses made after each head of discourse, during which the clergyman sits down, and the people look about them, and cough."<sup>2</sup>

In a paper in the *Leisure Hour* for August 1861, the writer, describing the service on the Sabbath in the church at Haarlem, in Holland, says, "We were much surprised to find, on entering, that a large proportion of the males were covered. All took off their hats in singing, and then the minister prayed, but many retained them during the reading of the Word and the sermon." Fifty or sixty years ago, it was not unusual in our churches for individuals to put on their hats when the sermon had been commenced. Not only was this done by old and infirm men, who might be excused for doing it in cold weather, but some young men too might be seen with their heads covered during the preaching of the sermon—it being sometimes alleged, perhaps not uncharitably, that they wished to attract observation, especially when they had

<sup>1</sup> Charlesworth's "Life," p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Chr. Mag.*, 1816, p. 244.

become possessors of a new and fashionable fabric of felt.

It is told of Rowland Hill that, "being very much grieved by the conduct of some of his congregation, who were frequently unpunctual, he once offered the following prayer: "O Lord, bless those who are in their places ; have mercy on those who are on the road ; and save those who are getting ready to come."<sup>1</sup> Late arrival is not an impropriety peculiar to the past. There are still in every congregation, probably, some who are careless about reaching the place of worship in due time, who are detained by the most trifling circumstances, and sometimes by nothing but thoughtlessness, and who can thus miss, apparently without regret, the first song of praise, or the reading of the Scriptures, or the opening prayer, and not only subject themselves to loss, but disturb the worship and distract the attention of others. "The decency and solemnity becoming the sanctuary of God require that all the worshippers should be in their places, and all settled and still, at the commencement of the service, that they may begin and end together."<sup>2</sup>

" Think when the bells do chime,  
'Tis angels' music ; therefore come not late.  
God then deals blessings ; if a king did so,  
Who would not haste, nay give to see the show ?"<sup>3</sup>

Origen complains that in his time, "several came to church, not for instruction, but for diversion ; some went out as soon as they had heard the lecture ; others stayed

<sup>1</sup> " Life," by Charlesworth.

<sup>2</sup> Wardlaw's " Lect. on Ecclesiastes."

<sup>3</sup> Herbert.

not till the lecture was ended ; while some paid no attention to the discourse, but entertained themselves in a corner of the church.”<sup>1</sup> Among us premature departure is an impropriety more rarely seen than in former times. I remember individuals who uniformly left the church at the close of the sermon or during the singing of the last psalm ; and in most instances, probably, this was just a habit they had acquired, for which they could have assigned no reason. It was a highly reprehensible practice ; for they thus violated, though inconsiderately, the sanctity of the house of God and its services, and deprived themselves of an important part of the benefit connected with the dispensation of Divine ordinances. Ministers, it has been justly remarked, cannot by any power or authority of their own, impart a blessing ; but they may act as the appointed vehicles of blessings which God is pleased to bestow. The ancient priestly benediction brought down blessings on those on whom it was pronounced ; and we cannot suppose that the Most High will put less honour upon His ordinances under the Gospel. Instead of being slighted, as though it were merely a signal for the breaking up of the assembly, the benediction should be highly esteemed as the expression of the Lord’s good will to each of His faithful worshippers ; and every one of the worshippers should remain to receive it, and none be required to exclude themselves from the high privilege of being blessed in the name of the Lord by the ministers of the Christian sanctuary.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Sime’s “ Church History,” vol. i. p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> The benediction is an act of worship in which the minister is to be regarded as officiating, not in name of the people, or as leader of

The last unbecoming practice I shall notice, is that of opening the pew-doors, seizing hats, and making other preparations for departure, when the minister is about to pronounce, or is in the very act of pronouncing, the blessing, and then hurrying out of the church, "as if it were in flames, or the plague had entered it." This evil has to a great extent been removed by the practice now very commonly adopted, of making the intimations after the blessing has been pronounced. In some congregations a custom has recently begun to be observed, which is said to be universal in Protestant places of worship of every denomination out of Scotland, namely, the offering up by each worshipper of a silent prayer just before leaving, as well as on entering the house of God.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, silent prayer offered by the worshippers at these two moments is most appropriate, and is fitted to have a very beneficial influence on their minds; but it may be thought that this act should be invisible as well as inaudible, in order that it may be in no degree inconsistent with our Lord's precepts prohibiting to His disciples imitation of the ostentatious modes of performing personal devotions that were practised by the Phari-

their devotions, but in God's name, proclaiming and awarding the blessing to His people by a peculiar ordinance, appointed to be the medium of realising the blessing to those for whom it is designed, God's faithful worshippers. It should always be pronounced exactly in the form in which it is given in the apostolic epistles, and no attempt be made to improve it by altering arrangement of parts, or by any pleonastic or supplementary expressions, which, to say the least, indicate a want of good taste. It should also be appropriated to assemblies of the faithful.

<sup>1</sup> Dr A. Thomson's Address on "Behaviour in the House of God."

sees. However this may be, the following instruction given in the Directory should be observed:—"If any, through necessity, be hindered from being present at the beginning, they ought not, when they come into the congregation, to betake themselves to their private devotions, but reverently to compose themselves to join with the assembly in that ordinance of God which is then in hand."





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